







Re-framing the Italian Renaissance at the National Gallery, 1824 - 2014

Harriet O'Neill

Edited by Carlo Corsato & Susanna Avery-Quash



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Cover & Endpaper images: Digital artwork derived from detail of tondo frame, workshop of Sandro Botticelli, *The Virgin and Child with Saint John and an Angel*, about 1490.

National Gallery, London (original frame) © Paolo Pirroni

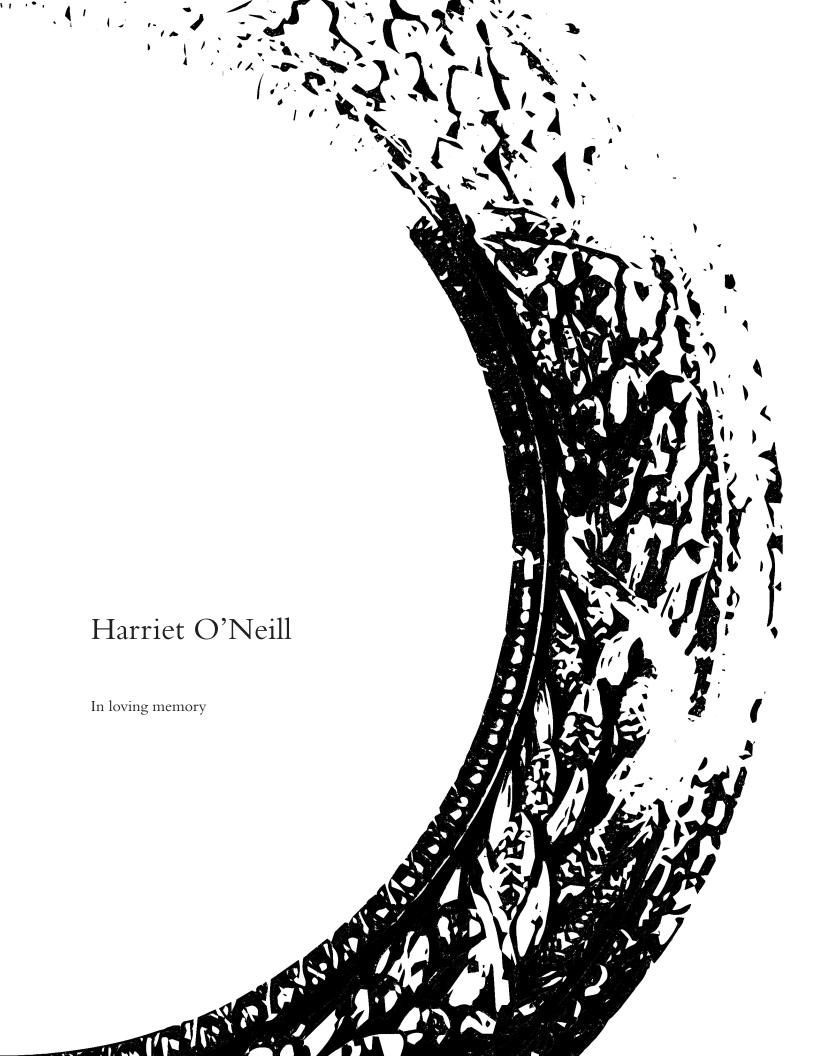
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- 154. Carlo Crivelli, Virgin and Child, about 1480. Tempera on panel. 48.5 × 33.6 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (492-1882)
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Foreword

Working with Harriet O'Neill on her doctoral project Re-framing the Italian Renaissance at the National Gallery, 1824 - 2014, in those productive, sometimes surprising and always enjoyable discussions in Susanna's office at the National Gallery, has been a highlight of the experience of research supervision for both of us. Harriet, with her training in art history, museum studies and first-hand knowledge of historical picture frames at auction, was an ideal candidate for this particular Collaborative Doctoral Award, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, which we had devised in order to study the National Gallery's Renaissance and Neo-Renaissance frames and the history of the institution's framing practice. Harriet's doctorate, started in 2011 and awarded by University College London in 2015, demonstrated how the framing, re-framing and placement of paintings in the National Gallery collection from the earlier nineteenth century to the present served to lend them a new art historical identity and helped to construct the very notion of the 'Italian Renaissance' in Britain. Though the project began with a broadly-defined brief written by us, as supervisors, and with the support of Nicholas Penny, then National Gallery Director, Harriet quickly made the topic entirely her own. The end result was a wonderful piece of scholarship that impressed not only us but also her two examiners, Scott Nethersole, then Reader in Italian Renaissance Art at the Courtauld Institute, and Chris Whitehead, Professor of Museology at the University of Newcastle.

Harriet's particular expertise in the nineteenth century turned out to be advantageous in many respects. The National Gallery's renowned Italian paintings have always been central to its changing presentation of the history of art, and Harriet's research shed light on everything from key figures in their display history, like the Gallery's Victorian era Keeper, Ralph Nicholson Wornum, a painter and collaborator of John Ruskin (as well as a UCL alumnus), to the great aesthetic and museological questions of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. With her scrupulous archival research and voracious reading on everything from the long-running theoretical debates on ornament to developments in the museums of decorative arts, Harriet was able to reveal the local opportunities and pressures, especially those applied by Gallery Trustees and successive British Governments, while also recognising precedents and concurrent moves in German museology, especially the impact in London of Wilhelm Bode's approach to the unified display of paintings, sculpture and furnishing at Berlin.

To aid her studies, Harriet – with typical determination and persistence – threw herself into learning German. Another pillar of her effectiveness as a researcher was the impressive working relationships she built up with frame specialists in museums as well as frame-makers and conservators. Harriet not only asked the right questions but did so in the right way. Having catalogued many frames prior to beginning her doctoral studies, she could talk knowledgeably with practitioners using the discourse of those concerned with the making, conservation and presentation of frames. Equally, her thesis never fought shy of theories of the frame from within philosophy and was much the richer for that. Harriet was often laudably keen to provide a rationale for the developments she illuminated, so supervisions sometimes involved cautionary discussion as to whether 'policy' with regard to National Gallery acquisitions was always the right word. Sometimes historical accident and mere availability

emerged as adequate explanations for the frame purchases by this ever-pragmatic and resourceful institution.

Amongst the wealth of knowledge that the dissertation offers — and that is now published in this book — is an original study of the Gallery's purpose-made 'San Giobbe' frames. It shows why these architectural frames, introduced by Wornum in the 1880s to surround certain Renaissance altarpieces, were so important conceptually as much as practically. Equipped with glass to keep off the penetrating air pollution that adversely affected paintings in central London at the height of the industrial revolution, these Neo Renaissance 'tabernacle' frames were placed around and secured a place for the Gallery's biggest stars, like Raphael's *Ansidei Madonna*. Harriet's research showed that, notwithstanding the matte gilt surfaces that are unsympathetic to contemporary eyes, these frames were stars in their own right. Her desire to stop them falling victim to the differently historicising tastes of our own day was infectious.

In a characteristically self-deprecating and often amusing way, Harriet taught us all. She was a great learner herself and such an able, kind and discreet collaborator that she influenced others without their realising she was working on them. Colleagues from UCL and the Curatorial and Learning Departments at the National Gallery likewise realise what a lively and inspiring teacher she was. For instance, students on the 'Art in London' course that Harriet offered at UCL enthused about her ability to convey knowledge about a diverse range of works of art in a variety of contexts. They fed back how they felt empowered to take away what they had learned and apply it, in turn, to their understanding of paintings and other Renaissance works. In the course of researching her PhD, Harriet did the same for her supervisors. From us all, a deep and abiding thank you, Dr Harriet O'Neill.

Alison Wright & Susanna Avery-Quash London, July 2024

Editors' Note

Harriet O'Neill's doctoral thesis explored how the framing, re-framing and placement of paintings in the National Gallery collection shaped their art historical identity. Her work examined how these practices contributed to developing the concept of the 'Italian Renaissance' within the context of a national institution. Harriet's study illuminated key figures and pivotal moments in the Gallery's history. It shed light on the central aesthetic and museological debates, as well as international developments, that influenced the evolution of framing policies.

This publication, a collective effort, is dedicated to preserving and sharing Harriet's scholarship and serving as a tribute to her. We wanted her work to reach a broader audience, extending beyond the circle of frame specialists already familiar with her research. We established certain principles for this project, including the fact that we did not want any publishing house to profit from Harriet's work, and we were also keen to avoid paying fees for images and book design. Consequently, we made the decision to publish the book ourselves on Zenodo, which provides a unique DOI, and to use platforms such as Internet Archive and Google Books, which

enable distribution worldwide. We also resorted to the Independent Publishing Network to purchase the ISBN codes, the small cost for which was immediately covered through donations from Harriet's colleagues and friends.

In the summer of 2023, a few weeks after Harriet's passing, Peter Schade, Head of Framing at the National Gallery, proposed turning her doctoral thesis into a book. This idea seemed a fitting way to honour the time Harriet spent in his department during her doctoral research. Frame Conservator Isabella Kocum then approached us, and we agreed to co-edit the book and lead the project. However, it was the generous help of friends and colleagues, especially from the National Gallery's Learning and National Programmes Department, that made this project possible and allowed its completion in such a timely fashion. This collaborative effort allowed for the sharing of the workload and brought together a community united by their love and respect for Harriet. Everyone contributed their time and skills as they were able, without pressure or obligation. This collective endeavour was driven by a need to respond to Harriet's death, a way to find meaning in an otherwise inexplicable, tragic event. The project became a communal healing process for bidding adieu to our late colleague while at the same time producing a positive, lasting response to her contribution to scholarship.

We made a conscious decision to preserve the integrity of Harriet's original doctoral thesis by retaining the structure, original text and appendices exactly as she had submitted them to University College London in 2015. Recognising that doctoral dissertations necessarily remain a work in progress, we resisted altering the content so that the scholarship reflects what Harriet submitted. We rectified slips and updated attributions only when Harriet's original intention could be clearly deduced from other parts of the manuscript. Our choices, we hope, ensure that readers will encounter Harriet's authentic voice and style on every page of this book.

The manuscript was divided up for the purposes of proofreading, a meticulous process to which many colleagues contributed. Fiona Alderton and Carlo worked on the Introduction and Conclusion, Anne Fay on Chapter 1, Ed Dickenson on Chapter 3, Josepha Sanna on Chapter 4, Catherine Heath and George Fountain on Chapter 5

and Joseph Kendra on Chapter 6. Georgios Markou (Cyprus University of Technology) handled Chapter 2. Chloe Cooke, Charlotte Dodson, Coco Lloyd and Demitra Procopiou reviewed the Bibliography, under Carlo's supervision. Zara Moran corrected archival references of documentation in the National Gallery archive. Caroline Miller, Caroline Smith and Katy Tarbard cross-checked citations in the endnotes and added missing references to the Bibliography. Peter Humfrey (University of St Andrews) compiled a new and detailed index for us, and Josie Wood took on the crucial task of identifying the relevant page numbers for the index. Alison Wright (University College London) and Susanna, Harriet's PhD supervisors, provided invaluable assistance in reviewing hundreds of comments and edits on the entire manuscript.

The 159 illustrations follow the order Harriet decided. Paolo Pirroni, our typesetter and Harriet's partner, as a professional designer, was able to integrate the images into the text in the most appropriate places. Carlo and Paolo sourced and digitally edited the photos, overseeing all elements of the book design. Joanna Conybeare and Anna Murray helped correct and standardise the captions. Isabella Kocum assisted Carlo with the List of Illustrations, providing the unique identifiers for each frame in the National Gallery (F numbers). Various museums, organisations and photographers have generously released their images in the public domain or allowed their use under unrestrictive Creative Commons licences. However, it is fair to say that this publication would not have been so beautifully illustrated without the generosity of the National Gallery, which contributed about two-thirds of the illustrations free of charge. We are deeply indebted to Denise King, Rachael Fenton and Robin Vickers from the Photographic Department for sourcing and providing high-resolution digital photographs, and to Claudia Thwaites for her assistance with copyright clearance.

The book is published under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License. This grants permission to remix, adapt and build on the text non-commercially, with appropriate attribution and similar licensing for derivatives. The only requirements are that Harriet O'Neill's intellectual property should always be acknowledged, and any copies or adaptations should be released under the same or a similar licence

as the original. We strongly advocate for free dissemination of and access to scholarly research. We view this publication as Harriet's last and most generous gift to the academic community.

We are deeply grateful to all the collaborators mentioned above for dedicating their spare time to this project, in the certain knowledge that they were contributing to the preservation and wider circulation of Harriet's research. Their dedication and commitment have been instrumental in bringing this project to fruition. We would also like to acknowledge a few more friends and colleagues of Harriet's who had generously offered help but, for a variety of reasons, were not able to do so; their continued moral support, however, was much appreciated: Emma Darvill, Margherita Di Ceglie, Bethan Durie, Karen Eslea, Elena Greer, Allison Goudie, Naomi Lewis, Bethany Lloyd-King, Krisztina Lovegrove, Wendy Monkhouse, Emily Motto, Jennifer Sliwka, Jenny Staff, Alison Wain and Siân Walters.

It was an honour and privilege to know Harriet, work with her and eventually oversee her final publication. An editorial process is never easy, but with this particular project, we had additionally to contend with personal emotions, given that every word and image reminded us of Harriet and how much she is missed. Coordinating and supervising 27 colleagues required Carlo's research experience, determination and flexible management skills. Susanna's pragmatism and collegiality consistently supported the project, enabling its timely onward progress and successful completion. For future readers, this book will stand as a testament to Harriet's life and a tribute to her research. For those of us who worked on and made this publication possible, all the time and effort have been hugely worthwhile, allowing us to 'do something' for Harriet. While working separately at our tasks, we have also been a community, united and motivated by our shared love and respect for Harriet and each other. This book is evidence that the people we love live on in small details – like Harriet's giggly smile – and in their outstanding achievements – like her doctoral dissertation. This book is a living testimony and tangible sign that Harriet lives on and continues to make a difference in our lives.

Carlo Corsato & Susanna Avery-Quash London, September 2024

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the result of a successful proposal made to the AHRC for a Collaborative Doctoral Award between University College London and the National Gallery by Dr Alison Wright, Dr Susanna Avery-Quash and Luke Syson. I am grateful that these individuals had the insight to identify such a rich topic for research and allowing me to undertake it. Alison Wright and Susanna Avery-Quash proved to be the most supportive, patient, encouraging and rigorous supervisors one could wish for. Without funding from the AHRC, UCL Graduate School, the National Gallery and St. Hugh's College, Oxford, this project would never have been possible. I am particularly grateful for the travel bursaries I received from the National Gallery and the AHRC Graduate Fund which allowed me to travel to Germany and Italy.

During the PhD I have spent extensive research periods in the National Gallery Research Centre and Framing Department. I would like to thank Alan Crookham, Nicholas Donaldson and Nicola Kennedy for helping me access material in the archives and discussing my ideas with me. In Framing I would like to thank Peter Schade, Isabella Kocum, Louisa Davey and Hazel Aitken for

their support, encouragement and kindness. I owe a great debt to Dr Nicholas Penny, Director of the National Gallery and Jacob Simon (NPG), for their contributions to the discipline and generosity with their time and knowledge.

A PhD brings with it opportunities and challenges and I am indebted to my parents, Tom and Janet, for discussing my ideas with me and for their constant support and love and Paolo Pirroni, for his patience and kindness. I would like to thank all my friends but especially Nadia Tavares, Becky Fife, Rukshana Baki, Andrew Hurley, Rìona McMorrow, Lydia Wingfield Digby, John Wolfe, Eleanor Ling, Alison Stagg, Catherine Lofthouse, Elena Greer and Alison Harper, for encouraging me throughout the PhD process.

Finally, thank you to Crystal Palace, my home for the duration of the PhD. Its parks, cafes, community projects and people (who would become friends) sustained me while 'writing-up' and continue to inspire me today.

Harriet O'Neill London, 2015

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in chapter footnotes:

PLACES

BL British Library, London NG National Gallery, London

NGFD National Gallery Framing Department, London

V&A Victoria & Albert Museum, London

PEOPLE

CLE Charles Lock Eastlake
C.L. Eastlake Charles Locke Eastlake

KC Kenneth Clark PH Philip Hendy

RNW Ralph Nicholson Wornum

Frequently cited works are abbreviated thus:

Eastlake, Notebooks, 2011

S. Avery-Quash (ed), *The Travel Notebooks of Sir Charles Eastlake, The Walpole Society,* vol. 73, 2 vols, 2011.

Mündler, Mündler's Travel Diary, 1985

C. Tognieri Dowd (ed), *The Travel Diary of Otto Mündler, The Walpole Society*, vol. 51, 1985.

100		STORAGE FRAME No:
FRAMING DEPARTMENT	FRAME No: R.	
Picture No.9.29	Title Madama & Chi	1483 — FS 20
In storage On painting	wood $34\% \times 24\%$ Sight size	Width
SUITABILITY: Excellent Good Poor Very poor QUALITY: Excellent Good Medium Poor Improvable: Yes No	French English Neth Italian German Spanish Cent.Euro: American Unknown Jor repair Repair Minos	Date
h ALTERED: Enlarged	Reduced Repaired	

OTHER REMARKS.

Wyun Ellis 1878

Italian 15t/16 cent



Re-framing the Italian Renaissance at the National Gallery: Collecting, treatment and display

Objects and artworks are literally and conceptually framed and re-framed in and by museum and gallery interiors. In the contemporary museum environment, a plurality of agents, including curators, exhibition designers and members of museum education departments, use a range of interpretative tools to draw-out particular characteristics or narratives surrounding an object's history and frame-out others. In this thesis, I seek to show first that the hitherto largely unacknowledged use of picture frames as interpretative interventions requires readdressing in the context of the national museum. Second, I seek to show that exploring how the National Gallery used historic, historicising and Neo-Renaissance picture frames to re-frame Italian Renaissance paintings from its foundation to the current time offers an illuminating place from which to start correcting this lacuna. In addressing these two objectives, I treat the changing appearance of the National Gallery's interiors and the diverse socio-economic and art historical roles and responsibilities expected of it as a wider and frequently shifting conceptual and actual frame.

Catalogue entry for *The Madonna and Child* after Raphael (see Fig. 71) from the Levi-Penny Survey

By working outwards from these fundamental premises, it is possible to ask wide-ranging questions which have never been previously considered together and challenge Jonathan Conlin's claim that, until the Directorship of Neil MacGregor in 1987, there was a 'disdainful attitude' towards framing at the National Gallery.² The six chapters seek to identify the varied roles frames and framing have played in facilitating the entry of Italian Renaissance panels, separated from their original context, into the museum environment. I consider how re-framing engages with transforming these panels into historical specimens while simultaneously making them available for aesthetic pleasure and contemplation. I also address how re-framing formulated and indeed intervened, in the establishment of the Renaissance canon, as it was understood at the National Gallery. I relate the appearance of the frames themselves, and therefore the re-fashioned object, to mainly nineteenth-century but also twentieth-century readings of the 'Renaissance'. Here it should be stated that I recognise that the term 'Renaissance' is a problematic and fundamentally unstable concept, which has been used as a shorthand for a period ascribed with certain cultural characteristics. Considering how Italian Renaissance art has been re-framed over almost two hundred years also facilitates the narration of a wider history of frames and framing at the National Gallery, alerting the reader to the nuanced relationship between taste and display. I subsequently use my research findings to engage in a general discussion regarding the conceptual role of frames and framing in the museum environment.

From the outset, a distinction needs to be drawn between a picture frame, an object and framing as a process or practice. The latter is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as 'the act of framing something' and re-framing as either 'placing a painting etc. in a new frame' or 'to express (words or a concept or plan) differently'. In using 'frames' and 'framing' together, I wish to refer both to the physical object and the process, indicating that the noun and verb are inextricably linked, their roles and functions co-dependent and simultaneous. This approach enables me to pursue

the central aim of this thesis, which is to write the history of actual and conceptual framing and re-framing Italian Renaissance painting at the National Gallery. In so doing, I consider, describe and interrogate how re-framing can affect the function, meaning and reception of Italian fifteenth-century and early sixteenth-century paintings in the gallery environment.

The decision to limit my research project to exploring the re-framing of Italian Renaissance paintings at the National Gallery reflects the strength of its collections in this area and the main focus of the institution's collecting in the nineteenth century. Frames and framing play a fundamental role in the transition and consequent transformation of fifteenth and sixteenth-century panels, from a mainly devotional context to the museum environment. These transitions illuminate the shifting roles and functions of frames and framing from their origins as protective and honorific devices, heightening the spiritual dimensions of the paintings in the chapel, camera or civic context. In the art gallery, frames fulfil an equally diverse range of roles, which also stem from their functions to frame and frame-out; from facilitating the aesthetic experience to isolating a painting for particular honour and thereby directly intervening in the establishment of the Renaissance canon. Exploring re-framing in terms of contextual and object changes, relates to another important theme of my thesis. Namely how the functions ascribed to frames and framing change according not only to context but also over time.

The starting point for my research project was the National Gallery's important collection of Italian Renaissance frames, twentieth and twenty-first-century copies of them, palimpsest versions formed of fifteenth and sixteenth-century parts combined with later additions, and those executed in the nineteenth-century Neo-Renaissance style. By mining little-explored archival material relating to these distinct categories of frames in dossiers compiled by the National Gallery's Framing Department and archive correspondence of frame-makers and dealers, combined with close technical examination of the frames themselves, I have sought to narrate the framing histories of Renaissance panels in the National

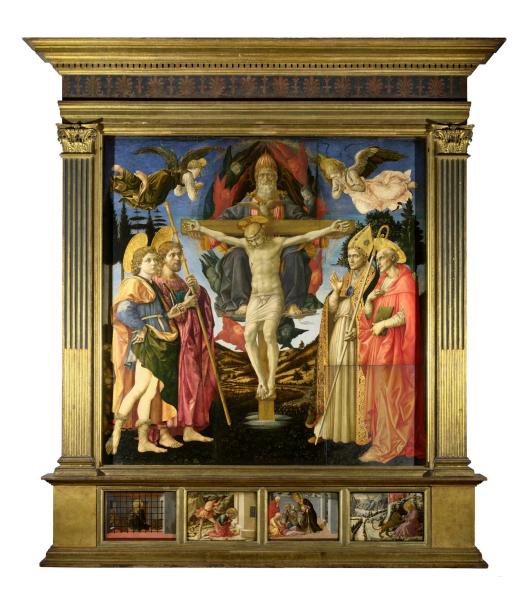


Gallery. Inevitably I could not write the history of every frame to every Italian Renaissance painting at the Gallery, so I have selected a number of case studies, according to one of three criteria. Firstly, the quality of any given frame, a quasi-objective judgment based on condition, carving and design. A prime example of this is the current frame surrounding Andrea Mantegna's The Virgin and Child with the Magdalen and Saint John the Baptist (NG274) (Fig. 1). Secondly, whether the re-framing decision was considered important at the time it was made, a statement that can be applied to the frame now containing The Pistoia Santa Trinità Altarpiece by Francesco Pesellino and Fra Filippo Lippi and workshop (L15; NG727; NG3162; NG3230; NG4428; NG4868) (Fig. 2). Finally, and related to the second criterion, whether the re-framing decision profoundly alters the understanding, reception or function of the panel, as does the frame around Sebastiano del Piombo's The Raising of Lazarus (NG1) (Fig. 3).

Throughout the research process, I sought to understand why certain frames were chosen for Italian Renaissance paintings at specific points in the Gallery's history and at what institutional level framing decisions were made (for example, by directors, keepers, trustees, curators, and from 1946, staff in the newly established Framing Department). In particular, I considered how changing understanding of the Italian 'Renaissance', the development of the art historical discipline as pursued at the Gallery, museum design and wider taste, affected re-framing decisions. To highlight how far re-framing at the Gallery was distinctive and to assess further the impact of the frame in regard to the reception of the painting, comparisons are made between the National Gallery's framing approaches and those of other international institutions.

Researching frames and framing at the National Gallery posed methodological problems. These issues were not insoluble, given the wealth of archival material available. Until the early 1990s, systematic record-keeping detailing which frames had been removed from which paintings, re-used and altered was non-existent. Thereafter, the frame-maker and dealer Paul Levi and future National Gallery Director Nicholas Penny conducted a survey of all the frames in store and on display, photographing and recording their age, style

 Andrea Mantegna, The Virgin and Child with the Magdalen and Saint John the Baptist, probably 1490–1505, National Gallery, London (sixteenth-century carved and gilded tabernacle frame)



 Francesco Pesellino and Fra Filippo Lippi and workshop, The Pistoia Santa Trinità Altarpiece 1455-60, National Gallery, London (early twentiethcentury carved and gilded tabernacle frame) and condition. Subsequently, the Framing Department digitalised photographs of frames on display and in store. The 'Levi Surveys', ⁵ together with conservation material and basic archival references such as invoices, are stored under the paintings' National Gallery reference numbers in dossiers with the Framing Department. This material, together with historic photographs, was compiled into an unpublished catalogue format by Louisa Davey, a former frame conservator at the National Gallery. Existing primary research was invaluable in allowing me to establish the age, provenance and use of the various frames I discuss here, particularly in relation to the inherent difficulty of identifying fixed points when one can say a frame was definitely acquired, when it was hung and for how long.



Establishing when a frame was applied to a painting is greatly assisted by the written and visual material held in the National Gallery Library and Archive. Key sources are the Gallery's account books, which list the price paid for its frames and outline other services paid for by the Gallery. On occasion more detailed information can be located in invoices that list the precise activity in relation to its frames for which the Gallery was charged, i.e. total re-gilding or the re-cutting of frames to allow glazing, which are referred to as 'windows' (e.g. Francis Draper's invoices from the 1930s). Historic interior views of the National Gallery are available through the painted and printed image, such as Frederick Mackenzie's *The National Gallery when at Mr J. J. Angerstein's House*,

 Sebastiano del Piombo, The Raising of Lazarus, 1517, National Gallery, London (architectural moulding, cornice pieces, renaissance) Frederick Mackenzie, The National Gallery when at Mr J. J. Angerstein's House, Pall Mall, about 1824-34, Victoria and Albert Museum. London

 Henry Tidmarsh, The National Gallery, about 1885, London Metropolitan Archives

Pall Mall (about 1824-34) (Fig. 4), 'New Room at the National Gallery' published in The Illustrated London News on 15 June 1861 and Henry Edward Tidmarsh's (1854-1939) interior views, dating from 1883, which are held in the London Metropolitan Archives (Fig. 5). Of great interest and assistance are the photographs in the National Gallery's visual history files, particularly those capturing Gallery views in 1923 and 1932 (Figs 6 and 7). These photographs and images facilitate the location of the frames in the wider context of display and hanging arrangements. Although useful, such images can be unreliable as evidence. Often, they are highly selective in the views they depict and provide an indication of the frames used at certain points in the National Gallery's history with varying accuracy, some offering mere suggestions of the frame, others apparently topographically accurate. One of the best, and indeed rare, fixed points from the perspective of linking frames to paintings at a specific period, is contained in *The Pictures* by the Old Masters in the National Gallery (1872). This publication includes photographs of a number of works in their frames and others with the sight edge and middle section visible. By comparing these details with those on complete frames in store and on display, specific Gallery pattern frames can be identified as well as other framing solutions.

This primary information can also be more widely contextualised using information in frame archives in London. A form of digital archive which collates information on frame types and production has been produced by Jacob Simon and made available on the National Portrait Gallery website. Nicholas Penny's frame archive held at the National Gallery and dealers' archives, particularly those belonging to Paul Mitchell Ltd. and Arnold Wiggins & Sons, are also of key importance. These archives enable one to find comparable frames, examine how works by Renaissance artists have been framed in other collections and to assert whether the National Gallery was following fashions or setting them.

Identifying the various motivations for re-framing from the evidence of the National Gallery archives is problematic. Select Committee Reports, Annual Reports and Board Minutes, together with Director and Keepers' papers, e.g., Charles Eastlake's





 Interior of the National Gallery (Barry Rooms; looking north) in 1923. National Gallery Archive, London



 Interior of the National Gallery (present-day Gallery 29; looking west) in 1932. National Gallery Archive, London



notebooks and Wornum's papers, do contain references to framing and re-framing. Readers should be aware that the comments are frequently quite limited and pushing the interpretation of this type of evidence too far is a danger of the project. However, as I stated in the first paragraph, here I seek to go beyond this fundamentally empirical type of information and enquiry. What renders my thesis novel is the location of archival material within wider conceptual, historical and interpretative frameworks, which I outline in detail in Chapter I. Briefly, they are the construction

of 'the Renaissance' during the nineteenth century, philosophical readings of frames and framing, framing the social act of viewing and the museum as a frame. Finally, it should be stated that frames have been generally described using a specialist vocabulary, which ranges from the general and descriptive to highly specific terminology. I have therefore included for reference a glossary of key terms in the first appendix.

CHAPTER ORGANISATION AND SUMMARY

Terms such as 'framing strategy' and 'framing policy' are problematic when applied to the National Gallery. Decisions were limited by a host of often conflicting factors, ranging from what was available on the art market to what was affordable, and I have taken this into account throughout the thesis. Nonetheless, there are three distinct periods of thoughtful and considered decision-making. These periods are 1850–1913, 1920–60 (a period that was interrupted and affected by the Second World War) and 1990 to the present day. My chapter divisions do not adhere strictly to these date ranges as I adopted a chronological and thematic approach. This methodology meant that certain themes, such as the relationship between re-framing and the construction of the canon, made it impossible to adhere to strict chronological divisions.

With the exception of Chapter I, my thesis pursues themes within the chronological frameworks outlined above. Chapter I describes the existing literature on frames and framing. It stresses the importance of bringing frame-specific literature together with conceptualisations of frames and the issues explored in the literature on museums, decorative arts, art history (mainly focusing on Renaissance altarpieces) and museological constructions of 'the Renaissance' in the nineteenth century. I outline how these issues have been treated to date and highlight the obvious *lacunae* that emerge specifically in relation to frames and framing, explored in the subsequent chapters in this thesis.

Chapters 2 and 3 examine the motivations for the re-fashioning of Renaissance panels under the Gallery's first Director, Sir Charles Eastlake (in office for a decade from 1855) and his Keeper, Ralph Nicholson Wornum, and should be read as a pair. Chapter 2 considers the design and use of Neo-Renaissance frames and their perceived relationship with the visitor's aesthetic experience. In Chapter 3, I pursue the connection between re-framing and the practice of art history at the National Gallery. I seek to show that while frames imported from Italy made only vague references to the original context of the panels, the treatment of the frame surfaces was intended as a means of creating an appropriate connoisseurial and art historical environment. When read together, these chapters should demonstrate the crucial role physical frames played in the 'museumification' of predominantly religious artworks, many of which had already been rendered collectors' items in private settings.

Chapter 4 takes as its starting point three frames modelled on the portal ornament to the church of San Giobbe in Venice. These frames were commissioned for the National Gallery under the Directorship of the third Director, Sir Frederic Burton (1874–1894) and his Keeper, Charles Locke Eastlake (1878–1898), nephew of Sir Charles Lock Eastlake. Prior to 2010 one of these frames, which I will be referring to as 'San Giobbe' frames, surrounded Leonardo da Vinci's The Virgin of the Rocks (NG1093). San Giobbe frames continue to frame, as they have done since the 1880s, Raphael's Ansidei Madonna (NG1171) and The Virgin and Child Enthroned by Lorenzo Costa and Gianfrancesco Maineri (NG1119). At the time of its acquisition in 1882, The Virgin and Child Enthroned was ascribed to Ercole Grandi, although connoisseurs debated this attribution. I compare the style of, and functions assigned to, the San Giobbe frames to those of nineteenth-century gilded-oak cassetta frames, commonly referred to as 'Watts' frames, which were used throughout the National Gallery, regardless of the school or date of a given painting. 'Watts' frames replaced the National Gallery Neo-Renaissance frames commissioned by Wornum, as 'Gallery' frames.6

The comparisons I draw in Chapter 4, between mid- and late-nineteenth-century re-framing, as well as between two

different approaches to re-framing in the same period and institution, facilitates consideration of the factors that motivated shifts in framing policy and the exploration of competing constructions and presentations of the 'Renaissance' within the art gallery. In the case of the San Giobbe frames, we can also explore how large fragments of Italian fifteenth- and sixteenth-century altarpieces were re-framed. By considering the 'San Giobbe' frames from multiple perspectives, my analysis will illuminate the plurality of functions given to frames and framing during this period, particularly their role in the adaptation of religious art for museum and gallery settings in the nineteenth century.

In Chapter 5, I discuss why antique frames and copies of them were collected, adapted and reused at the National Gallery and the intended and actual impact these policies had on the presentation and re-presentation of Italian Renaissance panels. I demonstrate that this re-framing policy cannot be understood without reference to the consciously 'modern' museological approaches being pioneered in Berlin under the Directorship of Wilhelm von Bode (1845-1929) prior to the outbreak of the First World War. Bode himself was influenced by the innovative displays created by Florentine art dealers, notably Stefano Bardini (1836-1922) and Elia Volpi (1858-1938) around the turn of the twentieth century. Although this shared preference for using old frames inevitably created visual similarities in terms of how paintings were presented regardless of context, these individuals had different underlying motivations for employing them. Stimuli ranged from the use of frames as part of a wider art historical methodology, attempting to harness the aesthetic properties derived from their physical condition, especially clear evidence of age, to more pragmatic decisions linked to cost and availability. The metanarrative underpinning my discussion connects re-framing with the frequent repositioning and reconceptualisation of frames. This continually oscillated between being viewed as part of the painting, as part of the wall, the room or the wider Gallery. I posit that actual re-framing can be related to emerging, but fundamentally unstable, philosophical discourses on the nature of frames, in particular the relationship between the ergon (the work) and the parergon (supplement to the

work) as defined by Kant in *Critique of Judgment* and critiqued by Jacques Derrida.

In Chapter 6, I finally chart the re-framing of Italian Renaissance art with particular reference to the Sainsbury Wing under two successive Heads of Framing, John England (1978-2001), who was Conservation Officer between 1977 and 1979, and Peter Schade (2001- present). This consideration is timely, given that the National Gallery's Framing Department has been described as 'one of the largest and most expert framing departments in any museum', and it is this which facilitates a significant amount of re-framing as compared to other national scale institutions. I consider the types of narratives that curators, dealers and framers communicate to the Gallery's visitors through frames and framing and how the art historical discipline, conservation policy and financial considerations combine to impact upon re-framing. I then outline the form a contemporary re-framing policy could take and, in so doing, engage with the main question that specialist frames publications provoke. For example, The Italian Renaissance Frames exhibition held at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York in 1990, prompted the art critic John Russell to consider the issue of re-framing. He asked: 'Should it [the new frame] be a genuine period frame, a frame of a period quite different from that of the painting itself, or a modern frame?'8

This thesis attempts to address this question and, indeed, to ask whether re-framing should be undertaken at all by exploring one institution's approach to frames and framing over almost two hundred years.

I conclude by summarising my research findings and drawing attention to the key contributions to knowledge that I have made. This summary is then used to question the theoretical conceptions of frames and framing I discuss in Chapter 1.

- [1] For conceptual framing in art galleries see Whitehead, Interpreting Art in Museums and Art Galleries, 2012, esp. 53-110. For my discussion of Whitehead's use of interpretative frames see Chapter 1, 51.
- [2] Conlin, The Nation's Mantelpiece, 2006, 410.
- [3] OED Online (see Websites).
- [4] Technical analysis undertaken with the National Gallery's frame conservator, Isabella Kocum and the Scientific Department.
- [5] Defined in Appendix 1.
- [6] 'Watts' and 'cassetta' are defined in Appendix 1.
- [7] Christie's, 'The National Gallery', 1989, 20. Currently the framing department comprises a Head of Department, Frames Conservator, Frame Technician and a part-time administrator.
- [8] Russell, 'Frames Without Paintings at the Met', 1990.



I The frame in the expanded field

In the Introduction, I showed that my thesis engages with three key intersecting areas: how Italian Renaissance art was and is re-framed physically and conceptually at the National Gallery, the motivations for re-framing, particularly how the process relates to the perceived roles of the institution and the impact this had and continues to have on the reception of the panels under discussion. I also emphasised the importance of locating archival and material evidence within wider interpretative frameworks. Hitherto, no single publication has examined how the museological presentation of the Renaissance is shaped by frames and framing. I show that the conceptual positioning of frames and framing is partially responsible for this lacuna in publications on museum history and display, frame studies and Renaissance painting and architecture. Moreover, in drawing attention to the findings of art historians on the roles of frames and framing in the Renaissance period, I wish to trouble historical and contemporary museological presentations of Renaissance panels through frames that are or purport to be of the same age and origin. I do this by highlighting that the connection between the frame, panel and indeed setting was not always a harmonious one

Detail of the twentieth-century all'antica frame for Antonio and Piero del Pollaiolo's *The Martyrdom of Saint* Sebastian (see Fig. 126) between 1450 and 1550. I use the frame studies literature to suggest how this policy has developed, and museum studies publications to demonstrate how powerful these re-framing acts are in constructing the visitor's experience of the Renaissance. I finish by drawing attention to the general disregard for nineteenth-century frames, which as my thesis demonstrates were an important part of exhibiting the Renaissance between 1850 and 1880, a period in which the concept was being defined in a variety of forums. In focusing on the history of frames and the re-framing of Renaissance painting at the National Gallery, I engage with existing studies on the Gallery and the problematising of the concept of the Renaissance. Before exploring frames and framing in the wider field, I will briefly outline the state of the research in these two areas. ¹

THE NATIONAL GALLERY IN THE LITERATURE

The history and development of the National Gallery has been written from a number of perspectives. In many senses my focus on frames and framing pulls these approaches together, underlining their mediating function. The Nation's Mantelpiece: A History of the National Gallery (2006) by Jonathan Conlin examines the history of the National Gallery, addressing its development, the conceptualisation of its audiences, collecting practices and architecture. In The National Gallery: A Short History (2009), Charles Saumarez Smith considered policies and acquisitions at the National Gallery associated with successive Keepers and, from 1855, Directors as well as the Directors' relationship with the Board of Trustees. Charles Lock Eastlake, the Gallery's first Director, emerges as decisive in both publications. David Robertson (author of Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World, 1978) and Susanna Avery-Quash, firstly in her annotated edition of and introduction to, Charles Lock Eastlake's Travel Notebooks (The Travel Notebooks of Sir Charles Eastlake, 2011), and together with Julie Sheldon, in Art for the Nation: The Eastlakes and the Victorian Art World (2011) have demonstrated how the National Gallery's collections, displays and organisation can be seen as resulting directly from his interests and activities, most notably in pioneering the art historical discipline and collecting of early Italian art. The power of the National Gallery trustees, who were appointed by the Prime Minister and advised by the Treasury, has been examined by Andrea Geddes Poole (*Stewards of the Nation's Art. Contested Cultural Authority, 1890-1939, 2010*), her particular focus being the impact that the decline of the aristocracy had on British cultural life.

In The Public Art Museum in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Development of the National Gallery (2005), Christopher Whitehead examines the socio-political agendas which shaped the public museum in the nineteenth century. In particular, he discusses the intellectual and social issues motivating discussion on the display of paintings in the architectural environment of the National Gallery. Changes to the interiors of the National Gallery under Eastlake have been analysed in detail by Charlotte Klonk ('Mounting Vision: Charles Eastlake and the National Gallery of London' and Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000). In Spaces of Experience, Klonk makes an important observation in relation to methodology, noting that the issues she is examining find no real expression in the archival sources she consulted. To fill this lacuna she examines the issue through nineteenth-century conceptions of visuality, which were linked to current physiological understanding and aesthetic reception.² In her subsequent discussions, wall colour, gilding and lighting emerge as issues of key importance, although once again frames and framing are omitted. Anabel Thomas and Emma Barker have explored the processes informing the establishment and modification of the art historical canon at the National Gallery.³

All of these approaches to thinking about the National Gallery can be equally and usefully applied to exploring the factors which motivated framing and re-framing practices. Conversely, in introducing frames and framing into these discussions, our understanding of agency, canon construction and attitudes to display can be enriched. However, focusing on these types of discourses can only partially address the central aims of my thesis. An understanding of the development and questioning of the term 'Italian Renaissance' is essential to any consideration of the factors that affected its presentation and re-presentation at the National Gallery.

QUESTIONING THE 'RENAISSANCE': A HISTORICAL APPROACH

I question the validity of the term 'Renaissance' throughout this thesis but also, paradoxically, adopt it as if to accept it, as National Gallery staff and art historians have, and in some cases continue to. The longevity of the term, despite its obvious problems, must be due to the fact that it is suggestive of a certain set of cultural characteristics which separate the 'Renaissance' from the equally problematic terms 'Gothic' and 'Baroque'. Most commonly, the Renaissance is viewed as beginning in Florence and associated with the revival of antiquity in learning, literature and art between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. In artistic terms, the 'Renaissance' is inextricably linked to Raphael, Michelangelo and Leonardo, and North of the Alps, Albrecht Dürer, a legacy that stems from Giorgio Vasari's conception of artistic development in *The Lives of the Artists* (1550). Vasari's almost exclusive focus on the value of figural art and the powers of imitatio contributes to the marginalisation of the frame as a manifestation of Renaissance decorative art. This has had wide ranging repercussions on our understanding of the role and appearance of frames in relation to Renaissance panels and subsequently how they are re-framed in museums and galleries.

As William Caferro demonstrates in *Contesting the Renaissance*, contemporaries identified the 'Renaissance' as a distinct cultural epoch, although it was not named as such. Petrarch in *Letters on Familiar Matters*, for example, maintained that his knowledge of the rebirth of classical thought separated him from the 'barbarism' of the immediate past. These divisions were strengthened and enriched by Protestant writers who perceived a clear break between what they attacked as the corruption of the Church and Papacy, which they associated with the old age, and the new Reformist age. Enlightenment historians, notably Voltaire, aligned the period with the reawakening of human reason and specifically Italian 'genius' during the reign of Francis I (1494–1547), when Italian influence was first felt in France. Voltaire effectively confined the Renaissance to the realm of letters and viewed Florence as the model civilised city. In contrast to Voltaire, the French historian

Jules Michelet, applied the term in 1855 to a pan-European discovery of 'the world and man'. He argued that the fundamental difference between the medieval and Renaissance periods was that of spirit. For Michelet, 'spirit' encompassed the 'rebirth' of antiquity in the arts and the reconciliation of man with his inner nature and the external world. Caferro argues that in *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), Jacob Burckhardt wove Enlightenment and Romantic thought on the Renaissance together with German historical and philosophical writing. In fusing humanist, Protestant, rationalist, romantic, liberal and idealist traditions, Burckhardt created a new and highly influential version of the Renaissance as a cultural phenomenon. Burckhardt's 'Renaissance' was located in Italy and inextricably linked to human progress, reason, the individual (derived from Hegel's *Geistige Individualität*) and the revival of antiquity.

Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 6, all engage with the dominance of Vasari's teleological model of revival in the arts of design culminating in Michelangelo, who the author maintained had bettered antiquity. Vasari's presentation of the Renaissance was extremely powerful in the nineteenth century. New editions of the *Lives* were published in Florence in 1832 and 1838. And in 1857 an annotated version entitled The New History of Painting by Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle, and commissioned by John Murray, was published. 16 Hilary Fraser also identifies what she refers to as 'modern Vasaris', citing Anna Jameson's Memoirs of the Early Italian Painters and of the Progress of Painting in Italy (1868) as evidence for this. 17 Anecdotes and comments from Vasari's Lives punctuated publications by Charles Eastlake, the German art historian Franz Kugler (1808-1858) and Burckhardt, while Ruskin apparently read from the Lives in his lectures. ¹⁸ In Chapter 4, I will show that frames intervened in both challenging and supporting Vasari's conception of the Renaissance, highlighting the agency that can be given to framing and overturning the 'myth' that they are considered marginal. This analysis prompts a question of why frames and framing have been omitted from such discussions, given their importance.

FRAMING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Frames and framing might initially be considered to be both margin and marginal, but as Teddy Brunius establishes, they are essential, indeed integral, to how the centre, in this thesis the artwork, is interpreted. 19 This chapter seeks to bring these margins to the centre of the debate, specifically in relation to Italian Renaissance paintings. In so doing, I challenge claims made by authors of specialist frame studies publications that the subject has been neglected.²⁰ I seek to show that frames and framing have been approached from a multiplicity of perspectives; conceptually, in philosophical discussions on the nature of reality as well as the philosophy of art (particularly ontology and aesthetics), the sociology of space, collections histories, technical histories, artist monographs and exhibitions on frames. Far from being marginal and treated as such, it is rather that frames and framing have been discussed in a variety of academic and curatorial specialisms that occupy distinct physical and intellectual spheres. Or they have been omitted from more obvious discourses in which they might fit, namely the decorative arts.

Barriers exist between readerships, physical spaces and debates pursued in relation to 'fine' and 'decorative' art, art historians, museum curators, philosophers, framemakers, frame dealers, frame conservators and picture conservators. The problems that arise from subject separation are exacerbated by the languages in which these studies are published. Key texts have been written in German and Italian and, to a lesser extent, English but there is a relatively small and engaged shared readership for this body of literature in its totality. Moreover, technical knowledge concerning frame making is often passed down orally over generations of framers in workshops, rather than being published, and as such has to be accessed in a different way to the types of publications listed. Knowledge of and interest in frames and the process, practice, theory and effects of framing and re-framing therefore remains for the most part atomised. This state of affairs is frustrating since, despite the highly specialist nature of their research, all of the aforementioned types of publication engage, to varying degrees, with similar types of question - mainly identifying, even defining, the proper role of and category to which frames belong and subsequently isolating their function.

TROUBLING THE CATEGORISATION OF FRAMES AND FRAMING

Part of the problem in regard to picture frames is that they cannot be easily defined as being either part of the painting or strictly regarded as furniture or architecture. They are, as a consequence, never the prime focus of furniture, architectural or art historians. On a superficial level, they seem to have been pushed to the edges of academic enquiry. This point has been clearly articulated by Claus Grimm. In The Book of Picture Frames (1981), he argues that the primary function of the picture frame is to mediate between the painting and the architectural space in which it is located, rendering it both a piece of furniture and an artwork.²¹ Despite his perceptive statement, Grimm appears reluctant to engage with the in-between, mediating and highly ambiguous nature of frames, and ultimately argues that a picture frame should be considered principally in terms of its relationship with the painting: 'in its origin it is linked to the painted panel, in contrast to the mirror frame which is a piece of furniture with quite different artistic aims'. 22 If for the moment we accept Grimm's claim that the picture frame might have been originally conceived in relation to the panel, the dynamics of the relationship between picture and frame are far from simple. This is the case even in the unusual situation where the painting retains its original frame, that is to say the earliest or first frame or where picture and frame remain in their original location. Nor does Grimm's classification take into account the act of, motivations for and implications of re-framing.

In contrast to Grimm's arguments, there is a widely-held belief that conceptual and actual frames establish and maintain dichotomies. For example, Michael Pearson and Colin Richards view frames as marking differences between domains – inside/outside, sacred/profane, female/male and public/private. The idea of frames acting as borders to separate opposite realms is far from novel, particularly in the literature exploring the aesthetic experience, but rather it is oddly persistent. Both Georg Simmel (1858–1919) in 'The Picture Frame: An Aesthetic Study' (1902) and José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955) in 'Thoughts on Art and Philosophy – Frame, Garment and

Decoration' (1921), conceived the frame as a border, rendering the work of art an island, referring only to its own centre and protected from external influences. ²⁴ Their mode of analysis renders the frame the primary means of making the painting available for aesthetic experience. The connection between frames and the aesthetic experience is particularly relevant when applied to the art gallery.

Stephen Greenblatt argues that museum display and exhibition falls into two categories; those designed to illicit feelings of resonance and those designed to inspire a sense of wonder, the difference between the two being the level of engagement with reality.²⁵ Resonance for Greenblatt occurs when the object on display is curated so that it extends into the real world, whereas wonder 'stops the viewer in their tracks' and provokes 'exalted attention'. 26 We can locate frames within the resonant model of curatorship, as they can be seen to separate inside from outside.²⁷ Arnheim helpfully argued, that whereas sculptures happily share space with the 'real' world, paintings do not and require a frame to fence them off from their immediate environment in order to represent.²⁸ He asserted that without a border pictures would be subject to an uncontrollable number of meanings. For Arnheim, frames declare that a painting is a closed entity and prevent a plethora of interpretations being posited.²⁹ More recently, in *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of* the Gallery Space (2000), Brian O'Doherty has argued that picture frames play a key role in establishing that what they surround can be interpreted only as art, firstly by ensuring that paintings remain a self-contained entity and secondly, where appropriate, strengthening the fictional perspective within the painting by providing an edge to the composition. 30 In Critique of Judgment (1790), Immanuel Kant viewed picture frames, which he referred to as parerga, as merely complementary to the painting and firmly external to it: 'What we call ornaments ... [are] those things that do not belong to the complete representation of the object internally as elements, but only externally as complements'.31

The construction of frames as borders has been questioned in a number of subject spheres. According to Brunius, we might consider frames and the function of framing in terms of a battle between purists (and by extension formalists) and contextualists. For Brunius, purists restrict themselves to examining only what occurs inside the frame, whereas contextualists consider other external and motivating factors.³² The contextualist argument has widespread support. In Image on the Edge. The Margins of Medieval Art (1992), Michael Camille urges his reader not to view medieval culture in terms of binary opposites - sacred/profane and spiritual/worldly, but instead to consider how the edge (for example, a manuscript border) engages with the centre.³³ On a more extreme level, there are frame-historians who come close to obliterating the idea of the frame as border. Paul Mitchell, for one, argues that frames are the medium by which the 'fine arts' are combined with 'architecture' and the 'decorative arts'. 34 Although in saying this Mitchell perpetuates an arguably false distinction between the fine and decorative arts, his broader point is borne out through specific case studies. Maria Papini shows that the frames commissioned for the Corsini Palace in Rome in the late 1730s-40s were intended to harmonise paintings of different dates and origins, with the furniture and the decorative style of its interiors.³⁵

More recently, frames and framing have been approached from a deconstructivist perspective. This approach gives the frame no fixed place in a structure but rather a dialogic one, where relations are not 'one thing' or another but can potentially be both, depending on their relational character and the perception of their place. Jacques Derrida in La Vérité en peinture (1978), maintained through his discussions of the framing of philosophy, and therefore of knowledge, that there could be no clear separation of the ergon (work) and parergon (outside-the-work) as Kant had conceived it in the Critique of Judgment (1790). According to Derrida, the frame was external and yet integral, even constitutive, of the image/painting rather than external and detachable.³⁶ Derrida's arguments, particularly his view that parerga play an essential role in organising the ergon, informed The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork (1996), edited by Paul Duro. Collectively the studies apply Derrida's notion of the inextricable link between the frame and work to the painting and the frame (whether a physical object, semiotic or gendered concept). A particularly useful essay for my purposes is Louis Marin's 'The Frame



of Representation and Some of its Figures'. By analysing physical frames in terms of semiotics, Marin shows that the frame as an edge and border has a role to play in representation, meaning substituting 'something present for something absent'.³⁷

In focusing on the role frames play in presentation, one should not ignore the frames within paintings. In the on-line catalogue to the recent National Gallery exhibition Building the Picture: Architecture in Italian Renaissance Painting, Amanda Lillie discusses the internal framing within Sassetta's Saint Francis renounces his Earthly Father (NG4758). She shows that this framing structures the narrative, marking spiritual and psychological distance between father and son (Fig. 8).³⁸ In a recent collection of essays, Werner Wolf has argued that framing and frames become really provocative when they comment on themselves as framing, having a self-referential or meta-referential function. ³⁹ This observation is clearly indebted to Victor Stoichita's arguments in The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting (1997), that frames serve to confirm the painting as a fiction. A prime example of the self-conscious operation of the frame is the Bild-in-Bild in seventeenth-century paintings, where frames deliberately play on and reiterate the status of the painting as image. 40 It is useful to consider Stoichita's insights in light of Sven Sandström's Levels of unreality: Studies in structure and construction in Italian mural painting during the Renaissance (1963). He examines mural paintings and their relationship with architectural space, as well as the construction of different degrees of reality within them. He argues that external and internal frames should occupy a central position in discussions centring on the functioning of illusionistic aspects of painting. This is because they allow the painting to be viewed as both an object and a representation.⁴¹ We may conclude that frames and framing are vital to our experience of the artwork, regardless of how the relationship between the ergon and parergon is conceived.

In the following paragraphs I turn to the literature on Renaissance altarpieces and framing. This is to explore how understanding the roles and functions given to frames and framing during the Renaissance can be brought to bear on any of the conceptual debates outlined above. I also show the complexity of framing

8. Sassetta, Saint Francis renounces his Earthly Father, 1437-44, National Gallery, London strategies deployed in this period. My intention is to highlight that 'original' framing solutions can (at best) only be (re)created in galleries through in-depth art historical research. Employing generalised ideas of how Renaissance panels were framed can only lead to standardised re-presentations of the Renaissance in galleries, which overemphasise Renaissance 'harmony'.

Frames and framing in the Renaissance context

The frame is not the primary object of investigation for Renaissance art historians. Nevertheless, Christa Gardner von Teuffel, Machtelt Israëls, Michelle O'Malley, Henk van Os, Nicholas Penny, Peter Humfrey and Anabel Thomas have employed an art historical approach to frames. They use contracts, drawings and other primary sources as well as the frames themselves to answer fundamental questions about the organisation of the business of frame making, the terms employed in the period, the extent of the involvement of the painter and the role of the frame in meaning-making. These issues have been largely ignored by authors of frame studies literature, who focus on establishing the style and age of specific frame types.

It is in the field of the Renaissance altarpiece that most of this historical work on frames and framing has been undertaken. This is unsurprising. Frames and framing are absolutely integral, indeed constitutive, to this specific category of Renaissance artwork, performing a role that extends beyond physical containment and which changes according to context and function. There are, however. notable exceptions in the literature, including Megan Holmes's examination of the enshrinement of miraculous images, which were not always altarpieces. An Nonetheless, this focus frames—out the importance of frames and framing to the many other types of paintings created in the period, including portraiture, deschi da parto and cassone panels. This observation partially explains why, in framing terms, these panels are treated similarly in the museum environment.



FRAMES AND ALTARPIECES

As Henk van Os observes, since 1990, there has been a particular resurgence of interest in reconstructing the original appearance of now-dismembered altarpieces. ⁴³ In the following paragraphs, it will become evident that engaged, integral frames and even autonomous frames were the primary means of arranging the component elements of altarpieces into a whole. As such, framing elements define our understanding of the original appearance of polyptych and *pala* and therefore also their relationship to the painted panels and the viewer's experience of the object. To take one example, Keith Christiansen illustrates the intimate relationship between paintings and their original frames through analysis of Giovanni di Paolo's,

 Giovanni di Paolo, Madonna and Child with Saints, 1454, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (original frame)



 Domenico Veneziano, Saint Lucy Altarpiece, about 1445-7, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence



Madonna and Child with Saints (1454) (The Metropolitan Museum of Art) (Fig. 9). He claims that the positioning of the Saints in this altarpiece was carefully considered in relation to the frame, asserting that the curve of Saint Monica's shoulder was deliberately intended to echo the curve of the leaves on the capitals of the frame. ⁴⁴ These harmonious frameworks were intended to influence the way the worshipper viewed the altarpiece. For example, the framing elements are echoed in fictive architecture in Domenico Veneziano's *St Lucy Altarpiece* of 1445–1447, which focus the viewer's attention on each saint, singularly, reinforcing saint-specific devotional practices at the time (Fig. 10). ⁴⁵ This type of analysis prompts the question of who was responsible for establishing the relationship between the painting and the frame, and thus of the *ergon and parergon*, during the Renaissance period.

In exploring how different agents influenced and controlled the final appearance of the artwork, we should be mindful of the distinctions Rubin draws between altarpieces such as the Pistoia Trinity (*The Trinity with Saints*) by Francesco Pesellino and Fra Filippo

Lippi and workshop (L15; NG727; NG3162; NG3230; NG4428; NG4868) (Fig. 2), which she argues was commissioned as a product of artistry and originally tied to ideas of manufacture and craft, and later sixteenth-century altarpieces conceived from the outset as works of art. The example she gives is the Martelli altar by Giorgio Vasari. 46 For Rubin, this paradigm shift occurred between 1450 and 1550, and was stimulated by painters dictating the qualities of beauty, instead of the patron commissioning the altarpiece.⁴⁷ It should be stressed that apparently simplistic divisions between the aims of artist in comparison to those of the patron require nuancing, as Christa Gardner Von Teuffel shows. The fact that it is impossible to reach a general conclusion about this question indicates that the varieties of practice are wide and the procedures often case specific. This finding once again emphasises the amount of research that is required to create a plausible frame for often inherently frame-less fragments in the contemporary museum environment.

Christa Gardner Von Teuffel argues that her approach to altarpiece frames revises precedents established in nineteenth-century literature (she does not name specific writers) on the subject. She claims that these writers did not pay sufficient attention to the role of both the carver and the gilder of frames and, by extension, the final appearance and therefore function of the altarpiece. Taken as a whole, her articles chart the transition from the late Trecento *polyptych* frame to the *all'antica* style frame, demonstrating that the introduction of the latter fundamentally altered the relationship between the painting and frame and the agency behind its formation.

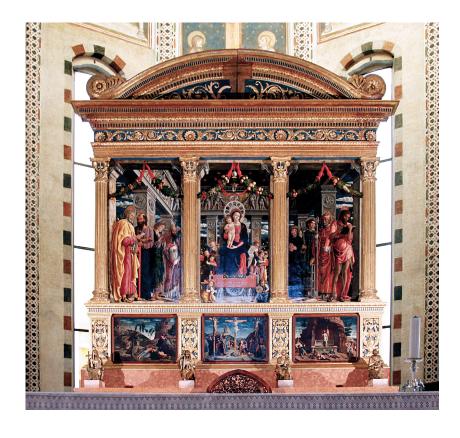
By referring to Cennino Cennini's *Libro dell'Arte*, Gardner von Teuffel shows that throughout the Trecento the whole wooden structure, including panels and frames, was prepared prior to the painting and that the overall responsibility for the design was the domain of the painter. ⁵⁰ By the mid-Quattrocento, the *all'antica* frame (characterised by a straight entablature flanked by pilasters and predella) had been rendered a separate entity and could be made before, during or after the painting. This development was made possible by the new concept of a unified central panel that could be worked on separately to the frame. ⁵¹ Gardner von Teuffel's mode of analysis underlines the autonomy of later Renaissance

frames, highlighting that they cannot simply be understood in relationship to the paintings they were intended to surround but as recognisable objects in their own right. She links these autonomous frames to identifiable craftsmen and artists, notably Neri di Bicci (1419–1491). 52

The role of the patron and traditions of various regional schools cannot be underestimated when it comes to the question of re-framing, a fact which nuances any claims that the artist was the primary agent in deciding on the final appearance of Trecento polyptychs and highlights the complicated development of Italian altarpieces. This complexity is shown in 'Masaccio and the Pisa altarpiece: a new approach' (1977). Since Masaccio's Madonna with Saints was, prior to its dismemberment, essentially a 'Renaissance' painting presented in a Trecento frame setting, its presentation through framing makes for a rich and interesting case study, particularly as the central section is now in the National Gallery (The Virgin and Child, NG3046).53 Gardner von Teuffel argues that the patron (the Pisan notary Ser Giuliano degli Scarsi) and members of the Carmelite order of the church for which it was commissioned may have chosen the frame model from an existing altarpiece or a design for one.⁵⁴ Consequently, Masaccio would have inherited the wooden structure and worked within the limitations it imposed. This proposition addresses why an apparently innovative artist would present his work in a traditional, even historical setting. 55 The Pisa example is not an isolated incident. Gardner von Teuffel examines the contract which instructed Piero della Francesca to paint a polyptych for the Augustinians at Sansepolcro (1454). The contract indicates that the framing structure was assembled before Piero began painting. The relevant passage reads, 'tabulam sic pingendam et orandam et figurandam, que est de tabulis compositam et laboratam de ligname ... solutam et factam fieri et fabricari per dictum Angelum'.⁵⁶

This type of research shows that the date of a painting or the artist's reputation does not always indicate the type of framework any given panel would have been presented in, rendering re-framing a complex process.

But even if the artist was connected with the frame, the relationship between the frame and painting is not always clear. Nicholas



 Andrea Mantegna, San Zeno Polyptych, 1457-60. Basilica di San Zeno, Verona (original frame)

Penny came to the conclusion that the frame for Mantegna's *San Zeno* altarpiece (in the Basilica di San Zeno, Verona) (Fig. 11) was completed before the painting, on account of the fact that the altarpiece frame made no obvious reference to the architecture in the painting. ⁵⁷ Instead, the fictive architecture within the painting, particularly the columns, seems to be an extension of the architecture of the frame, suggestive of Mantegna's attempts to elide fictive and real architecture.

Engaging with the same question but from a different angle, Michelle O'Malley (*The Business of Art: Contracts and the Commissioning Process in Renaissance Italy* of 2005) uses evidence in contracts to suggest whether the artist, *legnaiolo*, or patron was responsible for the design of a frame and therefore for the overall appearance of an altarpiece and the costs involved. ⁵⁸ O'Malley's work also shows that, in the Renaissance, the framing elements of an altarpiece were considered as important, financially and aesthetically, as the paintings within them. Vitally. O'Malley broadened the issues treated in this debate by interrogating exactly what was meant by the terms *ornamento* and *ornamenti*, which occur frequently in contracts. She



12. Filippo Lippi's letter to Giovanni de' Medici with a sketch for an altarpiece for Alfonso II of Aragon, 1457, Archivio di Stato, Florence (MAP vi, fol. 260)

concludes that they mainly refer to the decorative surround of the altarpiece. ⁵⁹ O'Malley's observation reminds the reader that frames and framing were not only functional but also decorative and honorific, a point which is borne out by research into the painter-designed frame. ⁶⁰

Frames designed by painters have been traditionally a favourite concern in studies of Renaissance art. In The Painter's Practice in Renaissance Tuscany (1995), Anabel Thomas examines the role of the painter in the framing of the altarpiece. For Thomas, the importance of the frame in the commissioning process is suggested by a letter to Giovanni di Cosimo de' Medici of 20 July 1457 from Filippo Lippi (Fig. 12). The letter includes a sketch of a small Gothic triptych he is producing for Giovanni, where the framework is drawn in carefully, whereas the details of the painted panels are barely suggested. 61 But frames and framing cannot be examined independently of their wider setting. Considerations of wider architectural contexts are essential to my purposes for two reasons. Firstly, demonstrating that frames were considered part of their architectural environments complicates the idea that original framing solutions can be recreated in the museum environment. This is linked to the second reason. Exploration of setting shows that no general conclusions can be reached in terms of whether frames should be considered part of the ergon or parergon. As such, framers must think carefully about whether a frame can be recreated independently of its architectural environment in a museum.

ALTARPIECES AND THEIR SETTING

As Amanda Lillie makes clear, one cannot consider altarpieces independently of their settings, which may include conceptual frames, particularly as they were on the whole site-specific commissions. She further attributes the inter-relationship between painting and architecture in the Renaissance to the shared training of artists and architects, citing the examples of the architect Giuliano San Gallo, who trained as a carpenter and Michelangelo, who was both a painter and sculptor before he began designing buildings. In the Renais-

sance period, these professions were inextricably linked by a shared interest in *disegno* which transcended artificial subject divisions. ⁶²

The importance of frames and framing in relation to their settings have been discussed from a variety of perspectives within the literature on altarpieces. For example, Machtelt Israëls discusses the frame to Sassetta's *Madonna della Neve*, analysing the structure of the frame, relating its shape to wooden and sculpted niche frames in Florence as well as considering how it would have appeared within the restrictive environment of the chapel in Siena Cathedral. ⁶³

Specific framing case studies reveal that the relationship between paintings, frames and wider settings could be harmonious. In her publication on the Pollaiuolo brothers, Alison Wright investigates the mediating role of the frame in a chapel setting. She shows, through her discussion of the altarpiece of Saints James, Vincent and Eustace in the Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal, San Miniato al Monte, Florence, that the *all'antica* frame played a vital role in situating the altarpiece within its Brunelleschian architectural setting and in relation to the painted angels pulling away a fictive curtain from the wall behind it. In so doing, she argues, the frame reinforced the idea that the painting was a continuation of the real space of the church, a characteristic that was essential for devotional practices (Fig. 13).⁶⁴

But while consideration of the relationship between frames and architecture is clearly important, it is by no means straightforward, particularly in relation to the mediating function of frames. Firstly, architectural contexts were modified, and secondly, frames were frequently made in a different ornamental style to that of the chapels they became a part of. To address these questions, we may refer to publications by Peter Humfrey, which also correct the hitherto Florence-centric approach of understanding altarpieces by considering examples which originated in Venice.

There are examples in 'The Bellini, the Vivarini and the beginning of the Renaissance altarpiece in Venice', where Humfrey encourages the reader to view altarpieces as a combination of painting and carving which related to the wider architectural environment in which the altarpiece was located. ⁶⁵ In these instances, he almost obliterates the idea of frames establishing borders between the paint-



ing and its wider setting. His observation confirms that frames and framing occupy a position of central importance since they function in relation to the pictorial composition, while linking the painting to its environment.⁶⁶ Furthermore, in privileging the influence of architectural context over the stylistic characteristics of the painting in his discussion of classicising frames (in my thesis, these are referred to as all'antica or tabernacle⁶⁷ frames), Humfrey alerts us to the important role of the architect. He attributes the development of all'antica frames to Brunelleschi, arguing that their inception was motivated by his desire to create visual harmony between architectural and decorative elements in the Basilica interiors he designed at San Lorenzo and Santo Spirito in Florence. He identifies the first complete Renaissance pale, as opposed to transitional examples, as Fra Filippo Lippi's Annunciation (Fig. 14), which was commissioned for San Lorenzo during Brunelleschi's lifetime, and Fra Angelico's San Marco altarpiece, which was designed to be seen against Michelozzo's new choir.⁶⁸

Humfrey's investigations into the regional development of *all'antica* style frames demonstrate that the relationship between frames

 Altar wall of the Cardinal of Portugal's chapel, Basilica of San Miniato al Monte, Florence (after conservation, 2021)



Fra Filippo Lippi, The Martelli
 Annunciation, about 1445, Basilica of San
 Lorenzo, Florence (original frame)



15. Giovanni Bellini, San Giobbe Altarpiece, about 1487, Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice Digital reconstruction by Carlo Corsato as it would have been seen in its original frame and altar in the church of San Giobbe, Venice

and their settings was not always one of stylistic harmony, especially when altarpieces were introduced into pre-existing environments. Humfrey maintains that, in Venice, the first classicising frame was that surrounding Bellini's *Saint Catherine of Siena* altarpiece, which was made during the 1470s for the Gothic church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo. ⁶⁹ This example allows one to argue that framing did not always establish a visual dialogue with the immediate architectural environment. For Humfrey, frame and architectural synthesis only occurred in Venice with the completion of Bellini's altarpiece with its stone frame for the church of San Giobbe, which Deborah Howard argues was the first example of Tuscan Renaissance architecture in the city (Fig. 15). ⁷⁰ This matter is further complicated by research which reveals that interventions were made to the appearance of altarpieces after they were situated in their architectural settings.

In The Renovation of Paintings in Tuscany, 1250-1500 (1995), Cath-

leen Hoeniger alerts us to the fact that Italian late medieval and early Renaissance paintings were often transformed into 'hybrid' images relatively soon after they were made, through alterations to their surface or by replacing the existing frame.⁷¹ Through reference to a diary entry by the aforementioned Neri di Bicci, relating to restoration of an altarpiece for Tommaso Soderini, she argues that re-framing decisions were linked to changing architectural taste.⁷² Neri di Bicci asserted that he wanted to bring the painting in question back to the 'taste of today' (*l'uso d'ogid*l) by adding a frame that had pilasters to either side, an architrave above and a frieze with a cornice (*cholonne da.llato e di dopra architrave, freg[i]o e chornic[i]one'*).⁷³

One example of the modification of altarpieces through re-framing cited is Giotto's *Baroncelli Polyptych* (now in Santa Croce, Florence), which was an essentially 'Gothic' painting (Fig. 16). The *Baroncelli* altarpiece remained in its Gothic frame until 1480. It was then removed from this frame and the top portion of the central panel was removed. The panel was subsequently placed inside an *all'antica* frame of a design which might be associated with Giuliano da Maiano. ⁷⁴ These modifications took place in conjunc-

Giotto, Baroncelli Polyptych, about 1334,
 Baroncelli Chapel, Basilica of Santa
 Croce, Florence (later frame)





17. Giotto, *Badia Polyptych*, 1300–2, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (later frame)

tion with changes to the physical appearance of the Baroncelli Chapel, which were linked to competitive chapel building and renovation by leading Florentine families at the time. Hoeniger claims that contemporary viewers considered these changes as such distinct moments of transformation that they were worthy of recording. The chronicle for the monastery and church of San Domenico near Fiesole records that Fra Angelico's *San Domenico Altarpiece*, was renovated, both remodelled into a square format and repainted ... by the painter Lorenzo di Credi'. To

For Hoeniger, the *Baroncelli* altarpiece was not only a product of two different periods but two different aesthetics. The Similarly, Giotto's *Badia Polyptych* was re-framed in Florence between 1451 to 1453 (Fig. 17). The re-framing process involved inserting triangular pieces of wood into the Gothic frame, which were subsequently painted with cherubs. These additions were removed between 1957 and 1958, in what Hoeniger views as an attempt to recover the original creative act. Hoeniger argues that by removing evidence of the 'Renaissance' from Gothic paintings, the museum fails to acknowledge their status and importance as hybrid or compound objects. From this discussion, it becomes clear that the appearance of altarpieces was not fixed, and therefore recreating frames is fundamentally problematic.

ALTARPIECES, FRAMES AND THEIR DEVOTIONAL FUNCTION

The role of the frame in relation to devotional function is important but complex, and again varies according to specific case studies. For a comprehensive discussion of the devotional function of altarpieces, I direct the reader's attention to Beth Williamson's article 'Altarpieces, Liturgy and Devotion' (2004). 81 In this article, she questions how useful it is to consider altarpieces from the perspective of function and original context. Beginning with the idea that the category of altarpieces is a difficult one to define, she considers their role in terms of liturgy, specifically in relation to whether they had a function to play in the celebration of the Mass or, instead, acted as labels, indicating the dedication of the altar. 82 She argues that altarpieces did both, especially when the dedication of the altar was connected to the celebration of the Eucharist. 83 Williamson warns the reader against attempting to find meaning in the first context of altarpieces because it is either difficult to recover or risks overlooking temporal context. 84 That said, art historians have considered the connection between altarpieces and devotion a mode of inquiry that implicates frames and framing, from the literal to the conceptual.

Art historians have also interrogated the nature of altarpieces as devotional objects. In *The Altar and its Environment 1150-1400* (2009), Justin E.A. Krosen and Victor M. Schmidt established the altarpiece, and therefore the frame, as the focal point for 'liturgical action'. ⁸⁵ Victor Schmidt examines Tuscan thirteenth- and fourteenth-century altarpieces from a range of perspectives, including type, material, function, commissioning and iconography. ⁸⁶ Frames are discussed alongside a wider consideration of the elements that comprised the altarpiece as an object, such as hinges. He then considers, as John White had done decades before, these objects in relation to their immediate devotional setting, which includes the hangings of various kinds required in the saying of the Mass and candles. ⁸⁷ Schmidt's approach complements Alessandro Nova's essay (1994), which considers how altarpieces were protected and covered, and the links these coverings had to church liturgy. ⁸⁸ Although few of

Giovanni Bellini, Pesaro Altarpiece, 1471-4,
 Musei Civici, Pesaro (original frame)

these hangings survive, they were clearly an integral part of how a number of highly regarded altarpieces functioned and were experienced. Indeed, there is documentation to support the idea that the aforementioned Pistoia altarpiece would have had hangings. ⁸⁹ These coverings might extend both the imagery associated with the altarpiece and its activation in a liturgical context, introducing a theatrical element to the work, being inextricably linked to the idea of periodic hiding and revelation of the image, which are, in turn, determined by the church's sacred calendar. ⁹⁰ Such a conclusion leads us back to the subject matters depicted in the paintings and the function of the altarpiece as a painting type.

As a case study in a late Quattrocento altarpiece, the architectural historian Deborah Howard in her 2004 discussion of Giovanni Bellini and architecture, examined the artist's use of the frame in The Pesaro Altarpiece (Coronation of the Virgin). She views the architectural character of the frame as an attempt to emphasise the separateness of the sacred realm (Fig. 18). 91 This type of analysis returns the reader to finding meaning in the painting's first display context, in this case as a high altar in a Franciscan Church. It is, arguably, John Shearman who has so far undertaken the most sustained analysis of the mediating role of the frame in the Renaissance chapel. For Shearman, both the artist and the spectator shared the assumption that there was a continuum (albeit fictional) between the painted space depicted in the altarpiece and the real space of the chapel. The immediate space occupied by the frame to the altarpiece was highly charged because it mediated between the two zones and allowed the worshipper imaginatively to 'enter' the fictive scene. 92 This observation confirms Derrida's conclusion that there could be no clear separation between the ergon and the parergon.

The role of framing in aiding or stimulating devotion has also been considered on a more abstract level. Alison Wright has examined how sacrament tabernacles operated as actual and conceptual frames in central Italy during the Quattrocento, providing representational stability and devotional animation to the Host, understood as the transubstantiated body of Christ. ⁹³ In her discussion of the framing of miraculous images, Holmes argues that frames as enshrinement communicated the extraordinary qualities



of the image, as well as the status of the patrons. 94 Thus they both enclosed and mediated access.

This brief description outlining how altarpiece frames have been discussed by art historians shows that frames were part of the image, object and of the architecture and could also function as independent autonomous objects. The paintings I shall be examining have long been removed from the churches and chapels for which they were intended, and often deliberately designed for, and subsequently re-framed. The original frames that remain have been absorbed into a genre of writing that I refer to as frame studies. By 'frame studies', I mean the body of literature that consists of detailed object analysis of frames.

In such studies, the status given to frames as distinct objects can be problematic. It is revealing that frame studies publications, often devoted to particular collections, remain distinct from wider discussions of the decorative and fine arts. This state of affairs is indicative of the fact that frames have rarely been considered as either part of fine art (being associated with pleasure), or the decorative or 'useful' arts and considered merely as being functional. Of course there have been exceptions to this approach. One is the art historian Alois Riegl, who sought to re-join decorative art studies with wider art history, maintaining that 'fine' and 'decorative' art could be equally viewed as expressions of artistic activity but even he failed to consider frames and framing.

Frames and frame studies

Publications that address frames as objects frequently, but clearly problematically, begin by likening the relationship between paintings and picture frames to a marriage, with the frame being described as an overlooked partner. ⁹⁷ This situation is seen as resulting from a wider problem of frames being either victims of their own success, drawing attention to the painting but rarely to themselves as objects, constantly present but seldom seen and hence rarely recorded or insufficiently interesting as objects in their own right. ⁹⁸ Frame historians claim that even if picture frames cease to be invisible or

considered uninteresting, there is such a paucity of documentary sources in which frames are discussed, that pursuing meaningful discussions about their functions or original effects is too hazardous. They maintain that as few frames are in their original condition (a term that relates primarily to size and to the state of gilding but occasionally historical context) or retain their original paintings, they cannot be productively engaged with. Indeed, while George Bisacca and Laurence Kanter's observation that replacing a frame helps objects (here paintings) move into new contexts is undoubtedly true, the act of re-framing is, nonetheless, rarely discussed in frame-studies literature, precisely because a concern for what is viewed as original dominates discourses. ⁹⁹

Despite the fact that studying frames is characterised as a doomed project, there is a growing corpus of writing which might be termed 'frame studies', produced by the same authors who doubt the validity of such a project. As a result, picture frames have emerged as a subject of historical study with functions, makers, designers and its own stylistic history. In what might be the first frames publication, *Le cornici italiane dalla metà del secolo XV allo scorcio del XIV* (1897), Michelangelo Guggenheim highlighted that original frames to paintings were being lost through the process of re-framing. Consequently, he sought to document original frames in terms of their origin, style and age. It will be shown that the absorption of frames into nineteenth–century interrogations of style has dictated the nature of the recent body of literature on frames, which seeks to link certain profiles of Renaissance frames to a particular region.

A revival of interest in Renaissance frames occurred during the 1990s. Key publications include *The Italian Renaissance Frames* by Newbery, Bisacca and Kanter (1990), *La cornice fiorentina e senese* by Baldi, Lisini, Carlo and Martelli (1992), *La cornice italiana: dal Rinascimento al Neoclassico* edited by Sabatelli (1992), and Newbery's catalogue to the frames in the Robert Lehman Collection at the Metropolitan, New York (2007). This body of literature is indebted to *Le cornici*, in the sense that their focus is the empty frame as art objects, although they lack Guggenheim's ideological tone. All four publications are organised into two parts. In the

main, the first sections balance technical information concerning specific collections of objects, where examinations of the original historical contexts of the frames are discussed. These discussions provide insights into the origins, development and application of frame ornament. The clear point that emerges is that Renaissance frames had far more in common with the architecture of the period, harmonising with doorways, niches and windows and other architectural surrounds, than with the paintings they enclosed, and as such evolved with wider architectural taste. 100 This conclusion might arise from the fact that these art historians are looking at the frames as empty objects and not in relation to paintings, a research finding which highlights once again that context dictates how frames are defined. In the second parts of these publications, the frames are, with the odd exception, illustrated without the paintings they now surround. The text accompanying these images establishes the date, origin and ornamentation of the respective frames. This body of literature highlights that the main aim of these authors is to catalogue regional frame-making styles, rather than address the presence of these objects in museums. IOI

The most recent contribution to this type of study adopts only the catalogue format, separating the frame from any other context than itself. In *Italian Renaissance Frames at the V&A:A Technical Study* (2010), one frame (indicative of the rest of the catalogue entries) is described as 'Carved, water gilded and originally polychromed tabernacle frame with perspective arch/ Italy (probably Tuscany), 1475-1500/Bought for £19'. This initial description is followed by a more extensive outline of the ornament. The entry then seeks to identify what the frame is made of, and suggests what it would have looked like originally, without nineteenth-century re-gilding. What is not mentioned is that, given its perspectival element, its likely function was as a sacrament tabernacle.

There are, of course, exceptions to this object-centred approach to frame studies. Paul Mitchell and Lynn Roberts' *A History of European Picture Frames* (1996), attempts to chart the development of the European picture frame while relating the narrative they construct to specific paintings (the majority of which are taken from museums) and their original context. However, their real

focus is the identification of the distinctive ornament and profile of each frame type, so that its date and origin might be established. In Frames and Framings (2002), Timothy Newbery attempted to discuss paintings and their frames in the Ashmolean's collections simultaneously, although ultimately the frame becomes more important than the painting. In the instance of the anonymous Adoration of the Shepherds, the painting is not mentioned and Newbery focuses almost exclusively on the Italian sixteenth-century tabernacle frame by which it is surrounded. 104 As the frame is not original to the painting, Newbery could have discussed the impact of the re-framing, but chose not to. Collectively, these publications provide a means of establishing the date and origin of frame styles based on recognition of the common elements of their construction. These types of publications have been essential in establishing a stylistic history of frames. But what they do not tell us is how the presence of these frames relates to museum collecting practice, which plays a major role in how they are defined, treated and used.

Frames, Museums and Collecting

For Hendrick Bjerre, museums, in particular, have a problem in deciding the status of their frames. This quandary is partially linked to conflicting opinions as to who might have been responsible for selecting them in the first instance (which is either unknown or more problematically impossible to generalise) and considerations of whose taste might take priority. It is also connected to their perceived qualities as objects (the subjective understanding of execution, gilding etc.). On the one hand, he argues that frames are viewed as anonymous decorative art and, on the other, that they acquire recognition because they are linked to paintings, which, in the majority of cases, have a known artist. The status and understanding of frames is obviously further complicated by the differing character of the institutions in which they are kept. For example, from the mid-nineteenth century, the South Kensington Museum (now Victoria & Albert Museum) collected Italian Re-

19. Sebastiano del Piombo, *The Madonna* and Child with Saints Joseph and John the Baptist with a Donor, 1517, National Gallery, London (sixteenth-century cassetta frame)

naissance frames because they were considered suitable examples of Renaissance ornament and ornamentation. ¹⁰⁶ Under Kenneth Clark's Directorship at the National Gallery (1934–1945), several of these frames were transferred to Trafalgar Square so that they could be used to re-frame paintings of a similar date. The sixteenth-century Venetian frame that now surrounds *The Madonna and Child with Saints and a Donor* (1517) by Sebastiano del Piombo (NG1450) (Fig. 19), was cut in the 1940s to accommodate its new incumbent. This procedure altered its proportions and demonstrates that even a so-called 'fine' example of frame making is secondary to the con-



siderations of a given painting in a specific environment – in this instance, an art gallery.

Attitudes towards the status of frames and the act of re-framing in museums have changed since the 1940s. This shift was, arguably, prompted by increased awareness of the importance of frames as objects and as manifestations of taste. In 1985, one issue of The International Journal of Museum Management was dedicated to the subject of frames. This unusual editorial decision was prompted by a reaction to the removal of historic picture frames by the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA), when it reopened to the public in 1984. 107 The three essays in the volume established that framing was an active and considered choice taken by curators and collectors, and explored the motivations for frame selection. Maurice Tomlin discussed the frames at Ham House, Richmond, Surrey; Peter Canon-Brookes explored Parisian eighteenth-century framing taste, with reference to Robert Tournières and Lord Bateman; and Hermione Sandwith, the National Trust's first conservation advisor, introduced the National Trust Frame Survey, which she had compiled in collaboration with Paul Levi. Importantly, the Frame Survey treated the National Trust's collection of frames as an integral part of its collections. Although the three articles address different eras in framing, collectively they show that the presence of a frame is often the result of thoughtful intervention, indicative of wider taste, with the frame having an innate value as an object and should, by implication, not be removed without due consideration.

In recent years, there have been three authors who have done most to integrate frame studies within the museum context. In *Frames*, an article entitled 'The Study and Imitation of Old Picture Frames' (1998) and catalogue entries in *The Sixteenth-Century Italian Paintings: Paintings from Bergamo, Brescia and Cremona* (2004), as well as *Venice 1540-1600* (2008), Nicholas Penny examines frame styles from the fourteenth to the twentieth centuries, their production and decoration in relation to the National Gallery's collection of paintings and its relation to the taste of collectors and Gallery Directors. The pioneering exhibition and catalogue, *The Art of the Picture Frame: Artists, Patrons and the Framing of Portraits in Britain* curated by Jacob Simon (1996), examined the frames at the National Portrait Gal-

lery in terms of the development of the picture frame, techniques of frame-making and the frame-making business. This approach allowed Simon to discuss a wide range of frames rather than those which are perceived as being of high quality. Penny argued that Simon's revisionist approach had enabled him to write both a frame history and a history of an institution's attitude towards frames. ¹⁰⁸ Using a similar approach, my project links an institutional history of framing to the history of the reception of the Renaissance.

There is a very limited body of literature which examines framing as an actual and conceptual issue in relation to the museum sphere. One pertinent element of Oleg Tarasov's discussion of frames and framing in Framing Russian Art: From early Icons to Malevich is his charting the framing strategies over time in Russia, from the special case of the icon to abstract art and modernism. By taking a long durée approach, he demonstrates that 'frames' (including the museum as a frame) in the widest possible sense, dramatically change in conjunction with society and its changing perceptions and uses of images. As the functions of frames and framing change, their impact on the reading and reception of images also changes. 109 Tarasov's observations might be read alongside Jean-Claude Lebensztejn's comments in 'Framing Classical Space', where he argues that the role of the frame changed considerably in the West in different periods (Renaissance, Baroque and Modernist). He argues that in classical art, the frame was considered as necessary but that it should be unnoticeable. III In the Baroque period, the function of the frame changed, becoming 'emphatic' and 'non-neutral'. 112 By contrast, the romantic artists sought to blur art and reality, which also impacted upon framing. 113 For Lebensztejn, the relationship between the painting and the frame shifted again in the early twentieth-century when, for example, Mondrian sought to fuse framing and painting, reflecting a wider concern with undermining any distinction between art and life. 114 Lebensztein concludes by stating that we should consider the frames that surround paintings, the walls they are on, the gallery or museum space they are located in and the art criticism that frames them, as wider frameworks. 115 This comment aligns with a body of literature that views frames and framing as interpretative apparatus.

Through reference to the findings of David Snow, E. Burke Rochford, Steven Worden and Robert Benford in 'Frame alignment processes, micromobilization, and movement participation', Christopher Whitehead confirms that frames organise and construct experience. 116 Whitehead argues that the interpretative frameworks at work in an art museum allow objects to become or at least be categorised as 'art', which in itself is a socially constructed rather than natural phenomenon. II7 For Whitehead, these modes of interpretation include every intellectual and political act which governs the entry of the object into the museum, however his focus is on 'in-gallery' interpretation (wall text and audio guides for example). 118 He argues, in relation to historic art, that interpretative frameworks privilege certain frames, notably 'evolutionary' frames which focus on style, and narrative ones, where explanations of the formal characteristics of the painting in question dominate. [119] Whitehead, drawing on the Marxist sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, claims that 'the nature and function of the object' are framed-out by the museum's own interpretative frames together with the possibility of encouraging any instinctive reaction to what is on view. 120 But Whitehead does not examine how physical picture frames work in conjunction with conceptual frames in the art gallery environment.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRAMES AND THE MUSEUM / ART GALLERY

Most of the re-framing I examine in this thesis took place in the nineteenth century. The nineteenth-century frame, in general, and the re-framing of Renaissance altarpieces in the nineteenth century, is clearly not a major concern of Renaissance art historians. Both subjects have failed to arouse any interest from any other branch of the discipline. The only publication wholly dedicated to nineteenth-century frames is *Framing the Nineteenth Century: Picture Frames*, 1837-1935 by John Payne. Based on the nineteenth-century paintings belonging to the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia, the publication includes technical descriptions, references to framemakers and, unusually, includes the nineteenth-century painting

each frame surrounds. However, the analysis does not link the frame to the needs of the museum and its institutional history. Instead, the introduction focuses on how the nineteenth-century frame has been ignored in the existing literature and under-appreciated, being viewed as a mass-produced object. 121 Payne attributes this as a response to the increase in demand for paintings being purchased for domestic interiors. 122 Indeed, nineteenth-century frames and their industrial origins appear to have rendered them distasteful to most museum curators and frame historians, and so they remain largely under-researched. 123 The only exception to the much-denigrated 'nineteenth-century frame' is the 'artists' frame', that is, one that was designed or closely linked to the painter of the work contained in the frame. Key examples include those associated with the Nazarenes in Germany and the Pre-Raphaelites in England. Both movements' use of the frame is privileged in the literature because they are viewed as a manifestation of the artist's original intention and evidence of how 'he' wanted his works to be seen. Furthermore, the hand-carved and specially designed frame appears to have more in common with Renaissance modes of production than those of the nineteenth century. As objects, they can be more easily inserted into a pre-existing art historical canon, which finds meaning through the artist's life and in relation to specific paintings. 124

There are a number of art historians and historians who are concerned with how objects are transformed when they enter a museum collection. ¹²⁵ Scott Nethersole addressed the effects of transition on the devotional work from the chapel to the market, and eventually a public collection, in this instance the National Gallery, in the exhibition *Devotion by Design: Italian Altarpieces before 1500* (2011). He affirms how, re-framing a painting, can alter both its meaning and reception. For example, Piero della Francesca's *Baptism of Christ* (NG665) was originally the central panel of a polyptych, positioned above the High Altar of San Giovanni Battista in Borgo Sansepolcro, in south-east Tuscany. The *Baptism* is now presented at the National Gallery, as it has been since the 1880s, as a single field altarpiece in a classicising frame within a semi-chapel-like setting. ¹²⁶ Nethersole places examples such as this in the wider context of their removal from chapels and churches and the fact that they had become

subjected to the demands of the art market. In acknowledging the impact of nineteenth-century frames, Nethersole advances the discussion beyond simply attending to and seeking to 'reconstruct' original frames, examples of which are rare in museum collections. I argue that there is scope for more sustained analysis of this nature in the right type of publication. Nethersole is less concerned with the nineteenth-century re-framings, which were anyway not the aim of the book and exhibition, which sought to provide visitors with an understanding of the original appearance and functions of Gothic and Renaissance altarpieces.

CONCLUSION

This chapter demonstrates the range of publications within which frames and framing have been discussed. The analysis also shows how exploration of National Gallery frames, framing and re-framing have been productively introduced into recent debates. In particular, my research reinvigorates understanding of museological constructions of the Renaissance and introduces often vilified nineteenth-century frames into the debate. On a more general level, charting framing and re-framing practice provides material for constructing an enhanced museum history. Finally, this material allows me to enter into conceptual debates surrounding the roles and functions of frames and framing, which are fundamentally unstable and constantly shifting. This observation highlights that the practice of using frames to 'fix' Renaissance images in a specific historical and aesthetic moment is fundamentally problematic.

- [1] 'Expanded field' is taken from Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', 1979.
- [2] Klonk, Spaces of Experience, 2009, 10.
- [3] Barker and Thomas, 'The Sainsbury Wing and Beyond', 1999, esp. 73-93.
- [4] For example, Letts, The Renaissance, 1981.
- [5] Caferro, Contesting the Renaissance, 2011, 1. There is an extensive bibliography on the periodisation of the Renaissance. For a discussion on how the term was understood within in the so-called 'Renaissance' period see Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, 'Interventions: Toward a New Model of Renaissance Anachronism', Art Bulletin, 87, 2005, 403-415. There is a vast literature on the reception of the term, particularly in the nineteenth century. A good general introduction to the topic is provided by George Hugo Tucker, 'Introduction: Petrarch's Curious Mountain of Virtue', 1-25 in George Tucker (ed.) Forms of the 'Medieval' in the Renaissance: A Multidisciplinary Exploration of a Cultural Continuum, 2000. For a more in-depth analysis see Wallace K. Ferguson, The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation, 1948. In particular, I would direct readers to the chapters entitled 'Conflicting Trends and the Beginnings of the Periodic Concept', 133-178 and 'Burckhardt and the Modern Concept', 179-252. For further critique of Burckhardt's conceptualisation of the Renaissance as the age of the individual read John Jeffries Martin, Myths of Renaissance Individualism, 2004. For exploration of the application of the 'myth' of the Renaissance see J. B. Bullen, The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth-Century Writing, 1994. For a discussion of the Renaissance in its widest sense see Erwin Panofsky, 'Renaissance and Renascences' in Kenyon Review, Spring 1944, Vol. VI, No. 2, 201-236. The concept of the Renaissance has been considered from a broader cultural perspective by Hilary Fraser in The Victorians and Renaissance Italy, 1992 and J. R. Hale, England and the Italian Renaissance: The Growth of Interest in its History and Art, 1977. The issue of whether the Renaissance represented a rupture between the 'Medieval' and 'Renaissance' periods has been discussed in Denys Hay (ed.), The Renaissance Debate, 1965 and Konrad Eisenbichler, 'Introduction' in Renaissance Medievalisms, 2009, 15-29.
- [6] Ibid., 2.
- [7] Ibid., 3. See Voltaire, Essay on Manners and the Spirit of Nations (1756).
- [8] Ferguson, The Renaissance in Historical Thought, 1948, 90.

- [9] Caferro 2011, 2.
- [10] Ferguson 1948, 175.
- [11] Ibid., 177.
- [12] Caferro 2011, 3.
- [13] Ferguson 1948, ix.
- [14] Caferro 2011, 3.
- [15] Fraser, The Victorians and Renaissance Italy, 1992, 45.
- [16] Ibid., 45.
- [17] Ibid., 47.
- [18] Ibid., 48.
- [19] Brunius, 'Inside and Outside the Frame of a Work of Art', 1969, 64.
- [20] Mitchell and Roberts, A History of European Picture Frames, 1996.
- [21] Grimm, The Book of Picture Frames, 1981, 15.
- [22] Ibid., 17.
- [23] Pearson and Richards, Architecture and Order, 'Ordering the World', 1994, 24.
- [24] Simmel, 'The Picture Frame: An Aesthetic Study', (1902) 1994, 11-17 and Ortega y Gasset, 'Thoughts on Art and Philosophy', (1922) 2008, extracts 2-5.
- [25] Greenblatt, 'Resonance and Wonder', 1991, 42.
- [26] Ibid.
- [27] Ibid., 43.
- [28] Arnheim, Power of the Center, 1988, 55.
- [29] Ibid., 56.
- [30] O'Doherty, Inside the White Cube, 1999, 14.
- [31] Quoted in Harvey, 'Derrida, Kant, and the Performance of Parergonality', 1989, 59 and 62. See Kant, *Judgment of Taste*, (1790) 2007.
- [32] Brunius 1969, 2.
- [33] Camille, *Image on the Edge*, 1992, 29.
- [34] Mitchell and Roberts 1996, 8.
- [35] Papini, L'ornamento della pittura, 1998, 101-121.
- [36] Derrida, The Truth in Painting, (1978) 1987.
- [37] Marin, 'The Frame of Representation and Some of its Figures', 1996, 79-95.
- [38] NG (Lillie): 'Architecture in Italian Renaissance Painting'

- (see Websites).
- [39] Wolf, 'Frames, Framings and Framing Borders in Literature and Other Media', 2006, 31.
- [40] Stoichita, The Self-Aware Image, 1997, 57.
- [41] Ibid., 11.
- [42] Holmes, The Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence, 2013, 211-218.
- [43] Van Os, 'Introduction', 1994, 1-2.
- [44] Christiansen, 'Italian Altarpieces', 1982, 4.
- [45] Rubin, Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence, 2007, 183 and 189.
- [46] Rubin, 'Commission and design in central Italian altarpieces c. 1450-1550', 1994, 202.
- [47] Rubin, 'Commission and design in central Italian altarpieces c. 1450-1550', 1994, 202.
- [48] Gardner von Teuffel, 'From Polyptych to Pala', 2005a, 186.
- [49] All'antica frame is defined in Appendix 1.
- [50] Gardner von Teuffel 2005a, 183.
- [51] Ibid., 190.
- [52] *Ibid.*, 189. See also Bicci, *Le Ricordanze* (1453-1475), 1976, 33-34, No. 64.
- [53] Gardner von Teuffel, 'Masaccio and the Pisa altarpiece', 1977, 48.
- [54] *Ibid*.
- [55] *Ibid*.
- [56] *Ibid.*, 39. The documents for the Sant'Agostino polyptych have been printed in Glasser, *Artists' Contracts of the Early Renaissance*, 1965, 279-288.
- [57] Penny, 'Mantegna Exhibitions in Italy', 2007, 33.
- [58] O'Malley, The Business of Art, 2005, 36.
- [59] Ibid., 29.
- [60] For the importance of ornament see Quiviger, *The Sensory World of the Italian Renaissance*, 2010.
- [61] Thomas, The Painter's Practice in Renaissance Tuscany, 1995, 115-126.
- [62] NG (Lillie): 'Architecture in Italian Renaissance Painting' (see Websites).
- [63] Israëls 2009, 57-73.

- [64] Wright, The Pollaiuolo Brothers, 2004, 193-194.
- [65] Humfrey, 'The Bellini, the Vivarini and the beginning of the Renaissance altarpiece in Venice', 1994, 139.
- [66] *Ibid*
- [67] The term tabernacle is more frequently used by frame dealers.
- [68] Humfrey 1994, 140. In this he is following Gardner von Teuffel, 'Lorenzo Monaco, Filippo Lippi und Filippo Brunelleschi: die Erfindung der Renaissance pala', 2005b, 229. Tabernacle frame is defined in Appendix 1.
- [69] Humfrey 1994, 141.
- [70] Ibid., 142.
- [71] Hoeniger, The Renovation of Paintings in Tuscany, 1250-1500, 1995, 1.
- [72] Ibid., 106.
- [73] Ibid., 382-383. Diary entry from 31 October 1471.
- [74] *Ibid.*, 107.
- [75] *Ibid.*, 109.
- [76] Quoted in *Ibid.*, 120. This was first quoted by Marchese, Memorie dei più insigni pittori sculptori e architetti domenicani, 1854, 229.
- [77] Hoeniger 1995, 2.
- [78] *Ibid.*, 6.
- [79] *Ibid*.
- [80] Ibid., 2.
- [81] Williamson, 'Altarpieces, Liturgy, and Devotion', 2004, 341-406.
- [82] Ibid., 343 and 356.
- [83] *Ibid.*, 385.
- [84] Ibid., 379.
- [85] Krosen and Schmidt, *The Altar and its Environment, 1150-1400*, 2009.
- [86] Schmidt, Painted Piety, 2005, 9.
- [87] Ibid., 95.
- [88] Nova, 'Hangings, curtains, and shutters', 1994, 177.
- [89] Ibid., 179. For the Pistoia altarpiece see Silver 2012.
- [90] Ibid., 181.
- [91] Howard, 'Bellini and Architecture', 2004, 147.

- [92] Shearman 1992, 59.
- [93] Wright, 'Tabernacle and Sacrament in Fifteenth-Century Tuscany', 2013, 42.
- [94] Holmes, 2013, 211-218.
- [95] Frank, The Theory of Decorative Art, 2000, 21.
- [96] Ibid., 12.
- [97] Payne, Framing the Nineteenth Century, 2007, 4, Mitchell and Roberts 1996, 6-7; Penny, Frames, 1997, 7, Bjerre, Frames: State of the art, 2008, 11.
- [98] Mitchell and Roberts 1996, 6.
- [99] Bisacca et al., The Italian Renaissance Frames, 1990, 11.
- [100] *Ibid.*, 11.
- [101] Powell and Allen 2010, 297.
- [102] Ibid., 76.
- [103] *Ibid*.
- [104] Newbery, Frames and Framings, 2002, xiii.
- [105] Bjerre 2008, 11.
- [106] Or at least this might explain their presence at the Victorian and Albert Museum.
- [107] I direct the reader to *The International Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship*, 4, 2 (1985) for these discussions.
- [108] Penny, 'Picture Frames. London', 1997a, 130.

- [109] Tarasov, Framing Russian Art, 2011.
- [110] Lebensztejn, 'Framing Classical Space', 1988, 39.
- [111] Ibid., 38.
- [112] Ibid.
- [113] Ibid., 39.
- [114] Ibid.
- [115] Ibid., 40.
- [116] Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford, 'Frame Alignment Processes', 1986, 464-481. See Whitehead, 2012, 53.
- [117] Whitehead 2012, 4.
- [118] *Ibid.*, xi-xii.
- [119] *Ibid.*, 57-63.
- [120] Ibid., 5. See Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste, 1984, 54.
- [121] Payne 2007, 4-9.
- [122] Ibid., 6.
- [123] Grimm 1981, 17.
- [124] Bjerre, 'On the History of Picture Frames', 2008, 49.
- [125] See Cherry and Cullen, 'Spectacle and Display', 2007, 1.
- [126] Nethersole, Devotion by Design, 2011, 12.





II
Re-fashioning the
Renaissance Object
for the National
Gallery, 1850-1880:
Neo-Renaissance
frames and the
aesthetic experience

In the following two chapters, I examine how and why Italian Renaissance panels were re-fashioned through their re-framing. In particular, I consider how re-framing and re-fashioning were dictated by the multifaceted requirements of the National Gallery as a public space, between 1850 and 1880, in conjunction with the impact of the sometimes-controversial issues surrounding the collection and display of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian panels. It is argued that the English-made Neo-Renaissance style frames examined in this chapter, were specifically linked to managing the introduction of these panels into a public collection, ensuring the viewer received a transformative aesthetic experience and therefore enacted a government agenda. In Chapter 3, I aim to show that the historicising frames, commissioned in Italy, are implicated in controversies surrounding the acquisitions process and questions surrounding authenticity. It may be that no absolute distinction can be drawn between the functions given to English and Italian historicising frames but, nonetheless, I maintain that the two groups of frames operated differently. The final part of Chapter 3 demonstrates that, regardless of the stylistic form of the frames, they were Detail of the portrait of Gentile Bellini in the nineteenth-century connoisseur's frame for *The Adoration of the Kings* by Workshop of Giovanni Bellini (see Fig. 38).

all oil-gilded, an intervention that was designed to enhance connoisseurial looking and deflect controversy.

Although any defined historical frameworks are an artificial construct, the period 1850 to 1880 was notable for the activities of the Gallery's first Director, Sir Charles Lock Eastlake (1855–1865), the Keepership of Ralph Nicholson Wornum, who died in post in 1877, and outside of the National Galley, the decisive activities of the museum reformer Sir Henry Cole (1808–1882), who proclaimed the moral benefits of museum visiting. These thirty years encompass the reforms of the National Gallery that took place in the 1850s, which are crucial to my understanding of the functions given to re-framing in general, and the use of Neo-Renaissance frames in particular. This period also marks the beginning and end of Henry Critchfield's career as the framer for the National Gallery. Critchfield made most of the English-made frames commissioned by the National Gallery in this period. 2

From the perspective of my thesis, the 1850s and 1860s were pivotal. Under Charles Lock Eastlake as its Director, the presence of Wornum and, for a brief time Otto Mündler, who acted as its Travelling Agent between 1855 and 1858, the National Gallery acquired an unprecedented number of medieval and early Renaissance Italian panel paintings. These acquisitions consisted mainly of altarpieces or fragments of them and other religious works. Most of these panels required re-framing and the most consistent solution found was to use Neo-Renaissance style frames, although the variety of interventions should not be underplayed. This is particularly evident in relation to the re-framing of purchases from the Florentine dealers Francesco Lombardi and Ugo Baldi in 1857.

It is impossible to identify a single function ascribed to frames and re-framing in the period 1850 to 1880. This is unsurprising considering the intrinsically mediating nature of frames, the diverse responsibilities of the National Gallery as an institution, the varied needs of its audiences and wide-ranging duties of its staff. In her *Handbook to the Public Galleries of Art in and near London* (1842), the art historian Anna Jameson (1794–1860), outlined the plurality of roles expected of the National Gallery. In so doing, she was articulating arguments and debates that had been and would be put forward,

in various Select Committee reports, especially that of 1853, which led to the reconstitution of the Gallery in 1855. Mrs Jameson began, 'A gallery like this – a national gallery – is not merely for pleasure and civilization of our people', continuing, that it should instruct its visitors, by revealing the connection between art and the political and religious contexts it was made in, and through this illustrate its development over time. Mrs Jameson characterised 'development' as increased sensibility to design, colour and light, exemplified in paintings by Leonardo daVinci, Raphael and Titian. By maintaining that the visitor to the National Gallery should be made aware of the context in which works of art were made, Jameson was anticipating some of the arguments put forward by Gustav Waagen in his essay in the *Art Journal* (1851), on the ideal arrangements of the National Gallery, and tapping into wider current thinking (especially in Continental Europe) about museum architecture and display. 4

Jameson's articulation of the plurality of the National Gallery's responsibilities, can be viewed as part of a wider analysis of the different viewing needs of its diverse audiences, which went beyond simply 'pleasure' and 'civilisation'. In an article in the *Quarterly Review*, an anonymous author contrasted the viewing habits of the connoisseur and artist (placed in the same category) with those of a 'man of education'. According to the author, the latter ('any one [sic] of the least refinement') sought to discern 'harmony or richness of colour, symmetry or grace of composition, purity or elevation of sentiment', i.e. the formal and emotional characteristics of the painting. By contrast, the connoisseur and artist were concerned with 'the detail and practice of art' and were defined as having detailed, particularised knowledge.

The responsibilities of the National Gallery's staff could also be wide-ranging, particularly in relation to those directly responsible for frames and framing. An incident between Wornum and the National Gallery Trustee, William Russell, alerts us to the fact that the Keeper was responsible for framing in this period. Wornum commented, 'I do not remember a single case when the Trustees were consulted about ordering a frame – Sir Charles left the framing to me'. The role of Keeper was a multifaceted one. In Wornum's case, he was employed, primarily, as an art historian to co-author (with



Eastlake) the National Gallery catalogues, but it was made clear on his appointment that his duties included 'housekeeping', an activity which clearly involved frames. The combination of administrative, house-keeping and art-historical duties with which Wornum engaged, suggests that discussions about framing, particularly their treatment, were inevitably related to larger nineteenth-century art historical discourses, but not limited by them. What should be iterated is that some re-framing incidents relate more to creating the aesthetic experience, rather than reinforcing art historical arguments, than others. But before re-framing can be discussed, it is necessary to outline the reasons for frame removal, as such activity was not always essential.

Carlo Crivelli, Altarpiece from San
 Francesco dei Zoccolanti, Matelica, after
 1490, National Gallery, London (original frame)

MOTIVATIONS FOR RE-FRAMING

The National Gallery had several alternatives when faced with the important issues of frames and more specifically re-framing: retaining the original frame (when it survived), adapting an old frame or commissioning a new one. No option was ever applied with any consistency. The pertinent issue here is to determine the factors that led to existing frames being discarded by the National Gallery. It was this activity that created opportunities for new frame acquisitions and can, in some instances, hint at the broader aims of the Gallery's diverse attitudes towards re-framing. To fully understand the issue of framing and re-framing in relation to Italian Renaissance art, it should be remembered, firstly, that some paintings would never have had a wooden picture frame as such. Instead, in their original chapel context, they would have been surrounded by marble frames, which could not be removed. A good example of this is Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo's The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian (NG292), which was surrounded by a Baroque re-framing when the Oratory of Saint Sebastian was refurbished in the seventeenth century.¹⁰ Secondly, original, that is to say the first frames, to Renaissance paintings at the National Gallery are extremely limited. One example is the fifteenth-century tabernacle frame to Carlo Crivelli's Madonna della Rondine (NG724.1) (Fig. 20) that was acquired with

the painting in 1861. There are also a number of surviving early integral frames, such as the one around *The Virgin and Child Enthroned*, with Narrative Scenes by Margarito d'Arezzo (NG 564) which is, with the exception of its gilding, 'original' (Fig. 21).

Between 1850 and 1880, and no doubt for longer, frames attracted customs tax when they were imported and thus one might expect that frames deemed unsuitable would have been discarded. But this was not the case. II Instead many works were imported with their frames, which were then subsequently jettisoned. It is frustrating that the direct cause or causes for discarding frames are rarely explained. On 19 January 1866 Wornum noted: 'Received the frame of the Vittore Carpaccio [The Madonna and Child, enthroned, with Saints and the Doge Giovanni Mocenigo, NG750] from Venice - no use'. 12 The heart of the issue appears to have been stylistic taste and notions of quality. Eastlake wrote to Wornum from Paris on 23 October 1860 explaining that the paintings he had acquired, presumably from Edmond Beaucousin 'will, I am told, be left in their present (poor) frames for security, but it will be necessary to think of a handsome frame (in a case with glass) for the whole predella'. ¹³ A 'handsome frame' could presumably communicate the prestige of the institution, and its collection as well as a specific painting. On 7 December 1864, Wornum wrote to Eastlake:

I have still plenty of money and I would rather use it toward the splendour of the collection than give it back to Mr Gladstone – I am making a new frame for the Guido, head of Christ [*Ecce Homo*, NG271] which has at present a very mean one, and I am dissatisfied with the frame [for]... the Van Eyck large picture ['Arnolfini Marriage', NG186], ... [it] has not the appearance it ought to make.¹⁴

These comments suggest that re-framing was motivated by a desire to display 'handsome' frames in the National Gallery, which would make an impression and have an impact on the viewer. This approach corresponds with Eastlake's opinions on picture restoration, an activity which often accompanied re-framing. The Director was concerned, firstly, with whether the painting was



'presentable' and, secondly, whether it could be improved aesthetically. 15 This attitude was obviously commonplace but by no means uniformly approved of. Eastlake's friend and National Gallery Trustee, Austen Henry Layard wrote, 'It must not be forgotten there are but few pictures by the old Italian masters ... which have not undergone the fatal process of 'restoration'. 16 The Italian writer and critic Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle claimed in relation to painting restoration that from the perspective of scholars and 'the person knowledgeable about art', it was preferable for paintings not to be restored, regardless of whether they were in a 'deteriorated state'. 17 For Cavalcaselle, restoration created what he described as 'awkward' combinations of old and new work. However, he maintained that this type of restoration persisted because the 'public' preferred to see a repainted work. 18 These comments seem to indicate that re-framing, like restoration, was inextricably linked to making the Gallery's paintings presentable to its audiences.

Potential metanarratives can be proposed which allow one to argue that the act of re-framing was in fact more complex than simply creating a presentable work of art, although this was powerful in itself. In contrast to the detailed conservation studies that

 Margarito d'Arezzo, The Virgin and Child Enthroned, with Narrative Scenes, probably about 1263-4, National Gallery, London (original engaged frame)

explore the impact of nineteenth-century restoration on paintings, and the conservation ethics of preserving them or not, comparatively little research has addressed how and why the appearance of historical (particularly Renaissance) objects and frames were altered in the nineteenth century. 19 One exception is Ellen Callmann's seminal work in the field of cassoni and a number of her observations can usefully be applied to my investigations. Callmann argues that much of the 'restoration' of cassoni undertaken for the English art dealer William Blundell Spence (1814-1900), led to the creation of 'pseudo-Renaissance' pieces of furniture, 20 the appearance of which was shaped by nineteenth-century taste.²¹ I argue that re-framing can be seen as being part of what Svetlana Alpers refers to as the 'museum effect', that is the deployment of display methods to ensure that visitors view 'appropriately' objects which have been removed from their original (which she terms 'ritual') site and placed in museums.²²

Hilary Fraser claims that the Victorians constructed and appropriated the Renaissance and then fabricated it in their own image and for their own ends.²³ One argument to support this claim posits that in the nineteenth century, Italian art of the past was seen to be symbolic of previous Italian strength and 'freedom' and therefore that restoring and displaying it demonstrated sympathy for Risorgimento politics.²⁴ I doubt that either Eastlake or Wornum viewed display and restoration at the Gallery in relation to nineteenth-century Risorgimento politics, but it is evident that paintings were being re-framed with a specific agenda in mind. In what follows, I engage with the arguments of the museologist Tony Bennett, who claims that the use of museums for social management in the nineteenth century involved re-fashioning objects for their new environments.²⁵ I suggest, through reference to the Gallery's Neo-Renaissance frames discussed in this chapter and treatment of old frames explored in Chapter 3, that the re-framing undertaken by Eastlake and Wornum actively re-interpreted the Renaissance object to enact both a government agenda, and create a connoisseurial environment, which was in itself a manifestation of what I term, 'anxious art history'.

Focusing on Neo-Renaissance frames

Amongst the National Gallery's diverse collection of frames, there is an intriguing and coherent group made between 1850 and 1880, which are characterised by highly (or hyper) legible Renaissance ornament. It is this hyper-legible ornament that renders these frames, which were never viewed as copies of Renaissance frames, distinctively nineteenth-century products. In the nineteenth century, when 'the Renaissance' was emerging as a cultural construct, the Neo-Renaissance frame was usually referred to as a Cinquecento frame, a reference to its early Cinquecento, i.e. High Renaissance ornament, dating therefore from circa 1490-1520. Although Neo-Renaissance frames were in general use in the nineteenth century, as indeed were the Neo-Renaissance styles, the National Gallery examples seem to have emerged relatively early in the development of the type.²⁶ For example, there is a design by the Milanese restorer, Giuseppe Molteni for the Neo-Renaissance frame to Raphael's Sposalizio in the Pinacoteca di Brera, dateable to 1856 (Fig. 22). 27 Nicholas Penny dates examples of the type in the Ambrosiana, Milan to 1905-06 and those in the Fine Arts Museum in Budapest to circa 1912.²⁸ Clearly the Neo-Renaissance frame could simply be read as a practical device with vaguely appropriate ornament to attract attention to and historicise the artwork. Instead, I examine the institutional, political, economic and religious factors that affected the commissioning, appearance, use and impact of Neo-Renaissance frames at the National Gallery between 1850 and 1880. I then argue that the National Gallery Neo-Renaissance frames were made specifically to support the underlying agenda of its interiors and that their ornament was deliberately intended to operate as a museological cue by Wornum. My research highlights how a common ornamental style could acquire a completely different role in the specially delineated space of the National Gallery.





THEORISING THE FRAME AND THE MUSEUM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Raphael, Marriage of the Virgin
 (Sposalizio), 1504, Pinacoteca di Brera,
 Milan (Neo-Renaissance frame)

Frames and framing have been approached from, and can be situated in, a number of philosophical debates. In this chapter, I position conceptions of frames and framing at the centre of theories on the decorative arts, museology and the aesthetic experience in order to show how the National Gallery's Neo-Renaissance frames can be perceived to have functioned as museological cues.

From the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, a history and theory of the decorative arts was developed.²⁹ During this period, focus on the purpose of decorative art, its modes of production and the role of ornament shifted. Mechanised manufacture concentrated attention on the nature of production and material qualities. However, the concept of the aesthetic nature of the decorative arts remained fundamental. The aesthetic properties of ornament in particular were analysed in terms of formal design qualities, its presence or absence in industrially-produced manufactures and its occurrence in specific historical styles of ornament. The frame, whether conceived as ornament, as ornamented, handcrafted, machine-made or a vehicle for and mediator of the aesthetic experience, was a recurrent theme. In Preliminary Ideas to a Theory of Ornament of 1793, Karl Philipp Moritz (1756-1793) discussed the 'necessary' and 'superfluous' aspects of ornament, as he viewed them, in relation to the frame, writing: 'The frame adorns a painting because it isolates it, sets it apart from the surrounding mass of other objects, and commends it to our attention as an exceptional object'.30

Fifty years later, Sir Henry Cole (1808–1882), General Superintendent of the Department of Practical Art and Director of the South Kensington Museum, addressed the border function of the picture frame and its intimacy with the picture in the *Journal of Arts and Manufactures*, a periodical which he established and edited, writing: 'the legitimate purpose which a frame should serve [is as] *a boundary to the picture*, both becoming so combined that the eye no longer realises that separation between the two which is so indispensable to the picture'.³¹

These two quotations highlight that frames were seen as mediating objects. The question of the relative autonomy of the frame is a problematic issue raised both by its relationship with the painting it surrounds and the environment it is situated in. During the early-twentieth century, frames and framing became the subject of sustained discussions that scrutinized the apparent paradox of the frame's position. As we saw in Chapter I, in Georg Simmel's 'The Picture Frame: An Aesthetic Study' and José Ortega y Gasset's 'Thoughts on Art and Philosophy', the frame was conceived as a border, which isolated the painting from external influences. It will be shown that their mode of analysis renders the frame the primary means of making the painting available for the 'aesthetic experience', which underpinned nineteenth-century conceptions of the art gallery.

Simmel divided 'things' into two categories, those that refer only to themselves and those that require a wider context to acquire meaning.³² He placed the work of art in the first category, by arguing that art 'is a whole for itself not requiring any relation to an exterior', being a man-made rather than a natural thing.³³ He claimed that as a consequence of this, the boundaries of an artwork operated differently from the natural world, where borders acted as a site of permeability for 'exosmosis' and 'endosmosis' - with the external.³⁴ By contrast, in the autonomous work of art the boundary is both a defence against the exterior and a link with the interior.³⁵ For Simmel, the frame not only marked off the external world but also isolated the viewer from it, to ensure that the viewing experience was purely an aesthetic one.³⁶ According to Simmel, the structure of the frame heightened the border function since the joints at its corners lead the gaze toward 'their ideal intersection', encouraging the eye to focus on the centre of the work of art and preventing it from wandering into the external world.³⁷

For Ortega y Gasset, the frame excludes the external in a different way: the illusionistic quality of the painting is maintained and heightened through the unreal qualities of the frame. He argues that ornament on the frame, even at its most geometric, refers in some way to the natural world, while the gilding covering it makes no reference to reality.³⁸ Ortega y Gasset claimed that the reflective

properties of gold create light that is 'pure colour without form' belonging neither to what it reflects nor what it is reflected by.³⁹ Instead, the reflections occupy the 'immaterial spectrum in-between'.⁴⁰ This independent, liberated light 'draws a glittering line between the painting and the reality around it. Its reflections of light are like knives that continually cut the ties we tend to want to make between the unreality of the work and the concrete reality of the surroundings.⁴¹

For Ortega y Gasset, the clash between reality and unreality mediated by the frame renders it the central vehicle for facilitating the 'aesthetic experience'. ⁴² Although a contested term, it privileges the idea of a disinterested, even disembodied gaze.

In *The Aesthetic Point of View* (1982) Monroe Beardsley argues, with reference to eighteenth-century aesthetics, that the aesthetic experience has five criteria: total focus on the object, escape from the everyday and yet detachment from the object on view, 'active discovery' and 'personal integration'. ⁴³ By grouping together major discussions on the topic, the psychologists Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson outline, in contrast to Beardsley's 'states', four outcomes of the aesthetic experience. ⁴⁴ These are access to, or understanding of, something that would be inaccessible through logical understanding, ⁴⁵ sensory pleasure, ⁴⁶ catharsis, ⁴⁷ and transcendence of actuality. ⁴⁸

The idea of an appeal to an explicitly aesthetic experience outside that of everyday life fits closely with Carol Duncan's analysis of the late 1990s of the liminal qualities of the art museum. ⁴⁹ Her work provides a means of contextualising conceptual readings of frames and framing and the aesthetic experience which she perceives as underpinning the presentation of the object in the nineteenth-century art gallery as a social space. She argues that the specially and specifically delineated space of the art gallery acts as a stage for a ritual and therefore social encounter. Visitors respond to set cues that ideally prompt 'decorous' behaviour, encouraging a stepping back from the everyday to facilitate immersion in what are constructed as the transcendental properties of the artwork. ⁵⁰

New Museological analysis of the nineteenth-century art gallery suggests that it was designed and run to address the eyes of an imagined passive visitor, in a bid to control their reception of the object. ⁵¹ For Hooper-Greenhill, looking – already the most distancing of the senses – is made more so by the presence of a glass case or frame, which increases the distance between the visitor and their experience of the object. She argues that barriers were introduced into nineteenth-century museums not so much for the protection of the objects but as a deliberate attempt to prevent the viewer from constructing his or her own meanings. ⁵² Barriers physically position the viewer to receive universal 'truths' as if from a higher authority, rather than allowing their own interpretation of the object. Hooper-Greenhill argues that, for nineteenth-century Trustees and Directors of the National Gallery, these truths were mediated by judgments of taste and were considered an intrinsic part of the aesthetic encounter. ⁵³

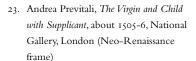
Just as the frames and framing in the National Gallery occupy a position between the real social world and the fictive world depicted in its collections, so also the National Gallery in the nineteenth century mediated between the paintings on display and their perceived benefits for wider society.⁵⁴ Re-framing Italian Renaissance painting was thus informed and limited by issues of national importance. In particular, the concept of ornament was at stake in this larger cause, an observation which has hitherto been limited to readings of the South Kensington Museum and its collections. Frames as ornament and with ornament were immediately implicated in the interpretative literature on ornament, to which important figures in the early formative history of the National Gallery contributed. Three people in particular wrote on ornament at this date and were intimately connected with the National Gallery: Waagen, Ruskin and Wornum. Gustav Waagen (1797-1868), art historian and first Director of the Berlin Gemäldegalerie, advised on the new design of the National Gallery in the 1850s. When he was called as an expert witness at the 1835 Arts and their Connections with Manufactures Select Committee, he sought to demonstrate that well executed ornament displayed in the museum space could improve manufactures.⁵⁵ During the 1850s, the type of ornament viewed as most suitable for accomplishing this task by the Government was the Renaissance style, in comparison to the apparently 'degraded' but none-the-less popular 'Louis XIV' style (short-hand for French seventeenth-century style ornament). It was, consequently, promoted by the training, lectures and publications of the Government-sponsored Schools of Design and the Ornament Museum (which became the South Kensington Museum and then the Victoria & Albert Museum). ⁵⁶

John Ruskin, who was central to the framing of the paintings in the Turner Bequest in the 1860s⁵⁷ at the National Gallery, argued in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853) that the production of ornament and its forms were innately socio-political and reflected the spiritual and moral well-being of the nation. For Ruskin, the Venetian Gothic was the most perfect expression of socio-political, spiritual and moral harmony, an opinion which challenged the opinions of the Government Art Schools. Equally important was the connection that Ruskin drew between ornament, the act of looking and the mind of the 'general viewer'.⁵⁸

As Keeper and Secretary at the National Gallery, Wornum designed and commissioned frames for the National Gallery.⁵⁹ He was also author of the Government Board of Trade sponsored books, which included Catalogue of Ornamental Casts in the possession of the Department: Third Division: The Renaissance Styles (1854) and Analysis of Ornament: The Characteristics of Styles: An Introduction to the Study of the History of Ornamental Art (1856) written for the Government's Department of Practical Art based at South Kensington. The two publications are not as distinct as their titles suggest. Wornum reproduced Ornamental Casts as the chapter dedicated to the Cinquecento in the Analysis of Ornament. In these texts, Wornum judged ornament according to whether it was used aesthetically or symbolically which, although problematic as a distinction, is suggestive of the conceptual terrain occupied by the neo-Cinquecento frames. He also discussed the physiological effects of ornament through constructs of beauty derived from eighteenth-century aesthetics. As the Neo-Renaissance style was inextricably linked with the aims of Government, the National Gallery and the South Kensington Museum, the person and career of Wornum, who did most to introduce Neo-Renaissance frames to the National Gallery is highly relevant. Indeed, his activities at the National Gallery seem to embody Henry Cole's South Kensington ideology, which is unsurprising since he was Librarian and Keeper of Casts there from 1852–1854.

NEO-RENAISSANCE FRAMES AS MUSEOLOGICAL CUES

A revealing comparison might be drawn between the view of the gallery we find in Frederick Mackenzie's *The National Gallery when at Mr J. J. Angerstein's House, Pall Mall* of about 1824–34 (Fig. 4), which shows the first incarnation of the display of pictures at the National Gallery in John Julius Angerstein's former residence at 100 Pall Mall and photographs of Gallery interiors in 1923 (Fig. 6). This comparison highlights distinct differences in terms of the style of the hang, types of paintings on display and frames. ⁶⁰ In the former, the paintings and their frames are clearly identifiable, with *The Raising of Lazarus* by Sebastiano del Piombo (NG1) displayed in a so-called Louis XIV frame, resting on two Egyptian sphinxes, dominating the hang. In this scene there is not only no representation of Italian paintings pre-1500 but also it shows almost exclu-





sively Louis XIV, Louis XV and neo-Rococo frame types, designed for the domestic setting and symptomatic of the taste of the early aristocratic trustees of the National Gallery or the collectors from whom paintings were purchased: Angerstein himself, the art dealer, collector and painter William Holwell Carr (1758–1830) and art patron and amateur painter Sir George Beaumont (1752–1827). The profiles and ornament of these frames create a dialogue with the frilly Rococo ceiling cornice, rather than forming relationships with the painting they surround. This approach to framing is fairly typical of an eighteenth-century domestic hang, where paintings and their frames were viewed as part of the overall interior design of the room and, consequently, grouped together according to a decorative rationale based on scale, colour or subject matter. 62

The later photographs of picture displays (Figs 6 and 7) at the National Gallery show different framing approaches alongside one another. Of particular interest to me is the documentation of the Italian Renaissance paintings in Neo-Renaissance cassetta frames (a legacy from the 1850 to 1880 period) and *all'antica* frames (predominately an inheritance from a policy that began in the 1880s). Unfortunately, in terms of visual evidence for framing, a gap exists between Mackenzie's painting and the later photographs, which is precisely the period under discussion here. We do, however, have many examples of the frames themselves (for an example see Andrea Previtali, *The Virgin and Child with Supplicant* (NG695) (Fig. 23) and the wider arguments posited during the ornament debates, which assist us in unpicking the role of the Neo-Renaissance frame at the National Gallery from the mid-nineteenth century.

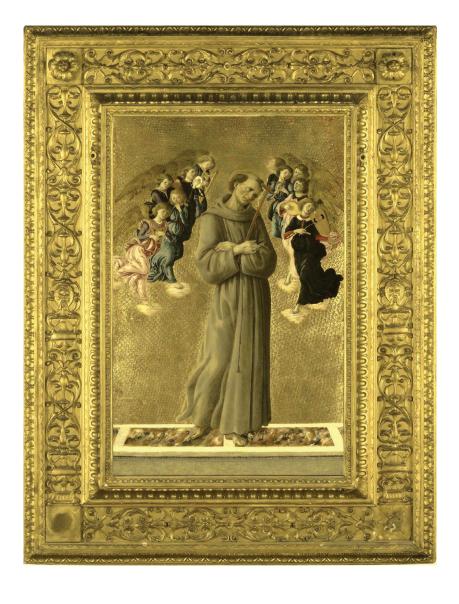
The major factor that motivated a different approach between the earliest manifestations of displays at the National Gallery and those of the mid-nineteenth century was the Gallery's more rigorously defined identity as a public institution. It had responsibilities for improving, civilizing and, to a much lesser extent, from the perspective of its powerful trustees, educating citizens. These aims were underlined by the investigations that led to the general reforms of the National Gallery in 1855. Enquiries revealed that the Gallery had been run as an extension of a private home, with no coherent collections policy or systems in place. One response to

the investigations was the introduction of a new style of scholarly catalogue first published in 1856. The reforms of 1855 also corresponded with the commissioning of Neo-Renaissance style frames. Wornum's reading of Cinquecento ornament in his *Analysis of Ornament* as beautiful and requiring no cognitive response has shaped my conception of Neo-Renaissance frames as museological cues, which became more important after the Gallery reforms of 1855.

My examination of Neo-Renaissance frames in a plurality of contexts and in light of the ornament debates is indebted to, but fundamentally differs from, other publications on frames and framing. Although the Neo-Renaissance as a style has been addressed in English architectural publications, Simone Chiarugi's Botteghe di mobilieri in Toscana 1780-1900 (1994) and Rosanna Pavoni in Reviving the Renaissance:The use and Abuse of the past in nineteenth-century Italian art and decoration (1997), the Neo-Renaissance frame has in general not been widely discussed. An exception is Penny's work which has, in short catalogue entries to the Italian sixteenth-century paintings, drawn attention to their presence at the National Gallery. These entries provide crucial analyses of the dates, makers and ornamental styles of such frames.⁶⁶ Surprisingly, even from within the institution, the National Gallery's Neo-Renaissance frames have been denigrated, alongside other types of nineteenth-century frames, on account of being manufactured in composition (ornament cast in plaster from moulds) and thus perceived as being mass-produced. As early as 1914, Robert Benson (1850-1929), Trustee of the National Gallery, banker and collector of Italian paintings, who had a demonstrable interest in frames, conducted a survey of the frames in the National Gallery. His analysis of the period this chapter addresses, read:

From 1850 to about 1880 fine original frames could have been obtained at reasonable cost, whereas now one may have to pay up to 100l. or even 200l. But even in 1850-80 they had to be collected with difficulty, and instead of collecting them, the Gallery fell back on what English frame-makers could supply.⁶⁷

Although we should be aware that a myth developed early on



 Sandro Botticelli, Saint Francis of Assisi with Angels, about 1475–80, National Gallery, London (Neo-Renaissance frame)

that antiques were always cheaper and more readily available to a previous generation, it is also clear that, given that the National Gallery had other framing options, the English frames made between 1850 and 1880 should not be dismissed simply as a fall-back solution. Indeed, Wornum made repeated references to re-framing in his work diary. When analysed, it is apparent that these framing 'episodes' mainly refer to the application of Neo-Renaissance frames. For example, on 9 March 1859, he recorded that *Saint Francis of Assisi with Angels* by Botticelli (NG598) (Fig. 24) and Bellini's *Madonna of the Meadows* (NG599) then catalogued as being by Marco Basaiti had been re-framed. ⁶⁸ Visual evidence demonstrates that in both instances Neo-Renaissance frames were used. The frequent

occurrence of Neo-Renaissance frames and the fact they were deliberately selected, indeed commissioned, rather than inherited, by the National Gallery testifies to their importance, quite regardless of artistic merit. Conversely, their *ad hoc* and pragmatic element should not be forgotten, particularly in their application to a broad range of paintings. Understanding their function is partially reached by establishing whether they were conceived as gallery-style frames or not.

GALLERY FRAMES AND REPEAT PATTERNS

In 'Die Ausstattung der Gemälde im Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum mit Alten Rahmen', published in the Amtliche Berichte aus den Königl. Kunstsammlugen, Wilhelm von Bode discussed the shortcomings of gallery frames, that is, frames of a uniform type applied to a range of paintings regardless of age or provenance. ⁷⁰ The examples Bode identified as being indicative of this type of gallery frame included the Pitti Palace frame and the Dresden Gallery frame. Tof the latter, Eastlake recorded in his notebooks in 1859 that the uniform style could not be successfully adapted to suit every painting in the Dresden collection (Fig. 25). His statement provokes the question of how we might categorise the range of Neo-Renaissance frames in the National Gallery. It is revealing that on one occasion, Eastlake informed Wornum that he might use the Gothic style frame, framing a Vivarini in Eastlake's own private collection, 'as a pattern for [Henry] Critchfield' (the framemaker). 72 This statement underlines that it was Eastlake's and Wornum's intention to create patterns of frames, rather than uniform gallery frames. Standardisation within frame design at the National Gallery might have been an important principle amongst Trustees. The Board Minutes of 1847 reported that re-framing could be in any 'manner', but that it had to be 'in accordance' with other frames in the Gallery, an instruction which would have created a degree of, but not complete, uniformity.⁷³

Nicholas Penny has identified a number of standard patterns on frames in use at the National Gallery between 1850 and 1880,



which I have so far collectively referred to as Neo-Renaissance frames. Photographs taken by Leonida Caldesi in *The Pictures by the Old Masters in the National Gallery* enable us to identify further examples of paintings to which these frames were applied and also to distinguish further standard-pattern National Gallery frames. This important and hitherto overlooked publication includes some 119 images of the National Gallery's paintings. Although photographing the frame was not Caldesi's objective (often only the sight edge, i.e. the part nearest the picture and middle section, the part between the sight edge and the edge of the frame are visible), there are examples where the complete frame is illustrated. Using this as a source, together with archival documents and surviving frames at the National Gallery, it is possible to build up a picture of what these frame parts might have looked like as a whole.

One standard pattern, which was used between approximately 1863 and 1870, was composed of a 'leaf' sight edge, reel-and-rod mid-section (derived from sixteenth-century Tuscan frames in Santa Maria Novella, Florence, such as the one which surrounded

 Karl Louis Preusser, In the Dresden Gallery, 1889, Galerie Neue Meister, Dresden



 Boccaccio Boccaccino, Christ Carrying the Cross and the Virgin Mary Swooning, about 1501, National Gallery, London (Neo-Renaissance frame)

Christ and the Samaritan Woman by Alessandro Allori, 1575), arabesque frieze (a Cinquecento pattern deployed, as Wornum stated, in the Vatican *loggie*, the Villa Madama, Rome and the ducal palace, Mantua) and a leaf back edge. Notably, it was applied to Boccaccio Boccaccino's *Christ Carrying the Cross* (NG806) in 1870 (Fig. 26). It quickly becomes apparent that the arabesque pattern alongside the anthemion are the fundamental features of the National Gallery's Neo-Renaissance frames. A similar arabesque element without the reel-and-rod mid-section, can be linked to at

least five paintings including *The Virgin and Child with a Supplicant* by Andrea Previtali (NG695) (Fig. 23). The earliest date associated with this pattern is March 1859.⁷⁸ The pattern seems to have been used for almost a decade. It can be found on the pilasters on the frame to Cosimo Tura's *The Virgin Enthroned* from the Roverella Altarpiece (NG772), which arrived in the National Gallery in August 1867 (Fig. 27).⁷⁹

Another distinct pattern, again based on the arabesque, was used on the altarpiece frame to The Virgin and Child with Saints by Marco Marziale (NG804) in the 1870s. 80 Here the ornament takes the form of Corinthian capitals, acanthus on the pilasters and honeysuckle and palmette twists applied to the frieze (Fig. 28).81 The next major pattern consists of a leaf and flower twist and is the principle ornament on a number of cassetta frames and the frieze ornament on some tabernacle frames. Examples of this type of ornament can be found still surrounding Saint Vincent Ferrer by Francesco del Cossa (NG597) (Fig. 29). According to Wornum's diary, this frame was ordered in March 1858. 82 A later press-moulded version of this ornament was commissioned from R. Dolman & Son in the 1880s. 83 A further Cinquecento pattern formed of repeat leaf and flaming urn ornament on the pilasters can be viewed on the frame to Carlo Crivelli's Annunciation (NG739) (Fig. 30) applied in the mid-1860s.84

Significantly, some of these patterns and their precedents in Renaissance monument designs, were illustrated and celebrated in the Cinquecento section of Wornum's overlooked publication, Catalogue of Ornamental Casts Of the Renaissance Styles and in the much better-known Grammar of Ornament edited by Owen Jones (1856). Both publications were intended to support the Government Design Schools' promotion of principles of good design. Thus, the honeysuckle pattern is based on the ornament on the monument to Louis XII at Saint Denis in Paris (that Wornum dated to circa 1520) (Fig. 31). Wornum described and illustrated it in his Catalogue of Casts because he felt the pilasters represented a 'pure' style of Cinquecento ornament derived from the Venetian School. The tight leaf and flower scroll, which is used in the frames mentioned above, was inextricably associated with the arabesque relief panels

- 27. Cosimo Tura, *The Virgin and Child Enthroned*, mid-1470s, National Gallery,
 London (Neo-Renaissance frame)
- 28. Marco Marziale, The Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints Gall, John the Baptist, Roch (?) and Bartholomew, 1507, National Gallery, London (Neo-Renaissance frame)

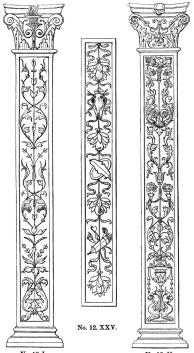




- Francesco del Cossa, Saint Vincent Ferrer, probably about 1473-5, National Gallery, London (Neo-Renaissance frame (F597)
- 30. Carlo Crivelli, *The Annunciation with*Saint Emidius, 1486, National Gallery,
 London (Neo-Renaissance frame)







No. 12. I. No. 12. II. From the monument to Louis XII., St. Denis, near Paris. c. 1520.

h. Large pilasters, 4 ft. 3\frac{1}{4}\tim. v. 5\frac{1}{2}\tim. h. Small ditto, 2 ft. 5\frac{1}{2}\tim. v. 4\frac{1}{4}\tim. v. 4\frac{1}{4}\tim.

- Small and large pilasters in the Monument to Louis XII, Basilica of Saint-Denis (Wornum 1864, p. 35)
- 32. Portion of a frieze, Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris (Wornum 1864, p. 37)

of Santa Maria de' Miracoli in Venice (1490), particularly with the ornament on the balustrade around the north pulpit made by the workshop of Pietro Lombardo (Fig. 32). 86 Wornum appreciated these arabesques as 'florid' and 'admirable'. 87

It is difficult to see what unites, for example, Zanobi Machiavelli's Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist (then thought to be by Fra Filippo Lippi) (NG587) (Fig. 33) and Francesco del Cossa's Saint Vincent Ferrer (NG597) (Fig. 29) that would justify using the same ornament to frame them. What we can conclude is that the Cinquecento-style National Gallery frame types appear to be a discrete category applied only to Italian works originating from the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries. Beyond this, there is clearly no obvious system being applied to the choice of frames, whether in terms of regional or chronological factors. It is, nevertheless, significant that Italian 'Renaissance' paintings were framed distinctively from those of British paintings and other schools, mirroring their separation in the catalogues and, to a lesser extent, in the display spaces. 88 That re-framing did not correspond with categorisations within schools in the catalogues is unsurprising. A review of the National Gallery in 1876 lamented that the organisation of the catalogues was not legible in the hang itself, and this is also reflected in re-framing.89



No. 17. II. Traverse, from Florence. Cinquecento. $h. 7\frac{1}{2}$ in. w. 3 ft. 11 in.



No. 90. Portion of frieze, collection of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris. Cinquecento.

h. 8½ in. w. 3 ft. 2½ in.



33. Zanobi Machiavelli, Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist, probably about 1470, National Gallery, London (Neo-Renaissance frame) 34. Pisanello, The Virgin and Child with Saints, about 1435-41, National Gallery, London (nineteenth-century connoisseur's frame)

CONNOISSEURIAL FRAMING AND THE PRIVATE COLLECTOR

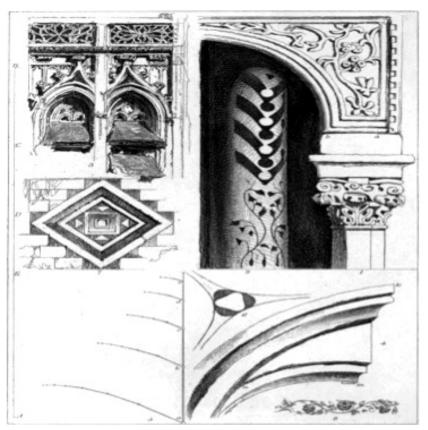
Comparisons between Neo-Renaissance and art-historians' or connoisseur's frames, the latter exemplified by the one currently surrounding Pisanello's The Virgin and Child with Saints (NG776) (Fig. 34), suggest that the former were intended to support the aesthetic and broadly socio-political aims of the National Gallery, rather than its scholarly ones. The new style catalogues that Eastlake introduced can be used to shed light on the category of the connoisseur's frame. Catalogue entries included biographical details of the artist, followed by descriptive analysis of the painting. The entry for Pisanello (Pisano) informs the reader that he was a late fourteenth-century painter and medallist, who was extensively employed by the Court of Ferrara and was held in great esteem by his contemporaries. The description outlines the attributes of the Saints Anthony and George, refers to the pinewood, the vision of the Virgin and Child and the location of the signature. 90 The frame, which must have been provided by Eastlake initially for his own private collection, may be viewed as a commentary on origin and agency and in keeping with the catalogue entry. 91 The inclusion in the frame of copies of portrait medals, originally executed by Pisanello or his workshop of himself (the presumed artist) and Leonello d'Este (the Marquis of Ferrara and presumed patron) leaves the viewer in no doubt as to the painting's authorship and the courtly circumstances of its making (Fig. 35). The frame incorporates elements of Venetian buildings, notably the façade of Ca' d'Oro in Venice (beloved of Ruskin) (Fig. 36) in its pilasters. It therefore seems to assert that Pisanello should be viewed as a Gothic artist, by relating him to the Venetian Gothic associated with the Northern court artists of Verona and perhaps Mantua too, where he had also worked. This type of commentary was arguably essential. When Eastlake purchased the painting from the Constabili collection, he noted its poor condition, writing: 'Blue sky almost rubbed to the ground. The armour and dress of Saint George once beautifully finished and now almost obliterated'.92

The condition of the painting called its attribution and quality into



- Pisanello, cast bronze medal of Leonello d'Este, Marquess of Ferrara, about 1441, British Museum, London
- 36. John Ruskin, 'Ca d'Oro' illustrated in Stones of Venice, London, 1853, plate XII





question. The frame can be seen as confirming this attribution and eligibility by placing the panel into a wider art historical discourse.

As Penny has pointed out, two similar frames belonging to, and commissioned by, Sir Austen Henry Layard operate in a similar way to that surrounding Pisanello's *The Virgin and Child with Saints.* ⁹³ The frame to Andrea Busati's *The Entombment* (NG3084) contains a gesso copy of a portrait medal of the artist in the bottom centre of the frame (Fig. 37). The plaster medal echoes the painted medal



 Andrea Busati, The Entombment, probably after 1512, National Gallery, London (nineteenth-century connoisseur's frame)

on the bottom edge of the painting below the fictive marble edge, which is presumed to show a portrait of the painter. The framing thus reinforces the painted *cartellino* inscribed 'Andreas busatti f[eci] t di/[s]I [p]ulus Ioanne[s] belinus'. A second work, which Layard claimed was by Gentile Bellini but which the National Gallery now attributes to Carpaccio, *The Adoration of the Kings* (NG3098), is also surrounded by an art historians' frame (Fig. 38). On the bottom centre of the frame is a copy of a portrait medal of Bellini by Vittore Gambello (1460–1537), which clearly supports an attribution to Bellini, even though this was one that was disputed at the time. This highly damaged painting was conserved by the London-based restorer Raffaele Pinti and then, on Giuseppe Molteni's advice, restored again by Luigi Cavenaghi (1844–1918), who had been Molteni's pupil. On completion of Cavenaghi's restoration, Gio-

 Workshop of Giovanni Bellini, The Adoration of the Kings, about 1475-80, National Gallery, London (nineteenthcentury connoisseur's frame)



vanni Morelli pronounced 'on y voit partout la main du maitre', meaning the hand of Gentile Bellini. 95

The names mentioned above, namely Giuseppe Molteni (a Milanese restorer and one-time Director of the Brera), Luigi Cavenaghi (artist and restorer in Milan) and Giovanni Morelli (art historian and pioneer of a particular method of connoisseurship) help characterise art historians' frames as a Milanese art historical intervention. Milan was an important organisational centre for Eastlake's acquisitions. Indeed, a significant amount of restoring, framing and export of Renaissance artworks seems to have been focused on Giuseppe Molteni's restoration studio at the Brera. Anderson and Hoeniger have highlighted the role that Molteni's removal of old varnish layers and repainted areas played in facilitating and implementing nineteenth-century art historical method, particularly the 'science' of attribution associated with Giovanni Morelli. 66 Molteni had close working relationships with Morelli, Eastlake, Layard and Mündler, all of whom were actively engaged in attributing and re-attributing paintings, the results of which can be seen in a number of publications, including the National Gallery's Descriptive and Historic Catalogue(s). 97 There may also be a connection between these frames and Molteni's approach to restoration, which facilitated reattributions. For Molteni not only restored but also 'improved' paintings, to make them align more closely with a given artist's established style. 98 For example, although Molteni was essentially faithful to the original composition of Pisanello's *The* Virgin and Child with Saints Anthony Abbot and George (NG776), he extended the upper spike of the right wing of the dragon. ⁹⁹ When treating Andrea Busati's *The Entombment* (NG3084), Molteni again intervened in the composition, removing the two *putti* on the marble ledge. ¹⁰⁰ Similarly, the art historians' frames proclaim their contents to be complete manifestations of the hand of a given painter. Most importantly, it should be remembered that these connoisseurial frames were not conceived as Gallery frames but had been commissioned by private collectors for their domestic residences, coming only to the National Gallery as bequests. The difference between these 'scholarly' frames and the Neo-Renaissance frames is one of specificity. The Pisanello frame, for example, was made specifically for the work and for a relatively small and educated audience, whereas the standard pattern frames were applied systematically but without reference to the paintings' individual qualities. ¹⁰¹

WORNUM AND THE CINQUECENTO STYLE

As we have seen, some of the ornaments applied to the standard pattern frames were illustrated in Wornum's *Catalogue of Ornamental Casts* (1854), published a year before he joined the staff of the National Gallery and *Analysis of Ornament* of 1856 (8th edition 1893), published a year after he became the Gallery's Secretary and Keeper. As the dates of Wornum's publications correspond with the introduction of the Neo-Renaissance frames, examining their presence in light of the arguments Wornum rallied in his theoretical writings should be revealing of the Gallery's motivations. Furthermore, Wornum's work diary and correspondence with Eastlake demonstrate that he was largely responsible for organising framing at the Gallery. Moreover, he occasionally designed frames, which Eastlake might then comment on, before they were actually produced by the likes of Critchfield.¹⁰²

Both of Wornum's publications analyse the history of ornament and design in terms of its development, from expressing symbolic meanings to being deployed simply for aesthetic pleasure, within a general narrative of development, rise and decline.

Wornum favoured what he conceived to be 'aesthetic ornament', since he viewed it as requiring an instinctive and perceptual response, rather than a cognitive one. Although the symbolic and aesthetic could co-exist, as Wornum argued had been the case for what he called the 'Saracenic period', 'beautiful' ornament was purely aesthetic ornament. By contrast, Wornum argued that symbolic ornament, by which he meant that signifying something beyond itself, a prime example being the Gothic, had been used without consideration of the effect of the design on the viewer and the intentions of the maker. 103 Furthermore, Wornum claimed that the expression of an underlying message could lead the viewer to a 'foreign ulterior end' through symbols alluding to a 'religious purpose'. 104 This reading of symbolic ornament threatened Kantian notions of beauty as being disinterested, both in its expression and reception. Furthermore, for Wornum, the absence of beauty in symbolic or aesthetic ornament risked failing to engage the mind of the viewer, appealing instead to mere bodily pleasure. This pleasure had resonances of licentiousness. Wornum does not make this explicit but this was a characteristic which in the nineteenth century could be conceived as a threat to the moral agency of the museum space. 105

Importantly, Wornum claimed that aesthetic design was not a matter of intuition but the result of a rational and scientific process. The executor or designer had to exercise a controlled freedom, adhering, but not becoming totally subservient to, the universal and fixed 'laws' of ornament. ¹⁰⁶ For Wornum, the manifestation of these laws was seen in the play of line, contrasting areas of light and shade, and symmetry, resulting in perceptible harmony and beauty, and a consequent 'gratification' of the mind by means of the eye'. ¹⁰⁷ The Greek *echinus* (egg-and-dart), for example, was not praiseworthy because it derived from a natural form, the 'horse chestnut', but because it was animated by the contrast of 'light' and shade' creating the sensation of pleasure in the viewer's mind. ¹⁰⁸

Wornum divided the remainder of the *Analysis of Ornament* into chapters that examined the aesthetic and symbolic merits of ornament, as he perceived them, in the major historical

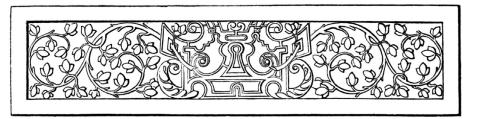
epochs - Greek, Saracenic, Roman, Renaissance and Modern. Despite admiring the aesthetic properties of Greek ornament, Wornum claimed that truly aesthetic ornament, i.e. that which was completely devoid of symbolic content, found its most beautiful expression during what he termed the Cinquecento period. The reason for this was, he claimed, because it was during the Cinquecento that art and religion finally separated. This 'liberated' designers from having to express religious sentiments and allowed them to appeal only to the viewers' sense of beauty. Such beauty was manifested in 'perfect' forms, such as the arabesque, anthemion and the 'curve' (or serpentine line). It is from this period of ornament that the designs for the National Gallery Neo-Renaissance frames were taken (Fig. 39).

Although the qualities described above were essentially a re-iteration of the Renaissance concept that harmony and variety delighted the mind, III Wornum's more immediate influence appears to have been eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophy, and specifically the notion of the beautiful in fine art having no other responsibility than the creation of pleasure 'diverting us from ourselves'. The sources of Wornum's aesthetic philosophy are difficult to identify with any precision. Perhaps this is because Wornum's reading of them was idiosyncratic but also because he does not follow one author but rather synthesises a number of different viewpoints. Another little-known document - the catalogue to the Art Manufactures Library by Wornum entitled An Account of the Library of the Division of Art (1855) provides us with some assistance. Under the theory and history of art section, Wornum listed a selection of recommended readings, which included Georg Wilhelm Hegel's Cours d'Esthétique (1820s). 113 Wornum's concept of symbolic art might have been influenced by his readings of Hegel. For Hegel, symbolic art was pre-Greek and could not effectively express its underlying message. Likewise, post-Greek, namely Christian, art had too complex a message to express. For Hegel, 'classical', whether Greek, Roman or Renaissance, was characterised by forms that expressed an idea perfectly. 114 Hegel associates this perfection with the absence in archaic and classical Greece of philosophy or theological dogma, which required



No. 109. Anthemion, imitation of the Greek. Paris.

h. 5 in.



Lock furniture, from a drawer in the Louvre. $h. 4\frac{1}{2}$ in. w. 1 ft. $5\frac{3}{4}$ in.



Portion of chimney-piece, Louvre. Germain Pilou. c. 1560. h. 11 in. w. 1 ft. 6 in.

cognitive understanding. II5 Like Immanuel Kant in The Judgement of Taste (1790), Wornum maintained that the perception of beauty was a universal and instinctive response, 'experienced through sensations' and not a cognitive one. IIA Although Kant's text was not identified as recommended reading, Wornum's privileging of the perceptive over the cognitive relied on, or echoed at least, Kant's concept of 'purposiveness without purpose'. Kant argued that taste, as opposed to mere gratification of the senses, emerged from the experience of the beautiful rather than the agreeable. 117 Forms were only beautiful if they were free from having to express a definite concept or purpose, the purposeful object being closely linked, for Wornum, to his notion of symbolic ornament. Despite being free from expressing the definite, laws were at stake in the Kantian concept of the beautiful, since form had to appear as if having been designed for a purpose. The synthesis of free and law-like form meant that 'Imagination' and 'Understanding' could interact to create pleasure and disinterested looking. 118 Although independent of moral duty, 119 Kant argued that a connection existed between the beautiful and the ennoblement of the mind.

In rallying discourses derived from Hegelian and Kantian arguments concerning aesthetic pleasure, Wornum situated himself in a tradition which attempted to dignify ornament, seen as part of the decorative arts, with the qualities of fine art. This, as we shall see, in theoretical but not practical terms, might render the Neo-Renaissance frame a double border. The first border was the frame as an object, as has been discussed in the introduction. The second superimposed border was formed of 'beautiful' ornament, a concept that was understood to enhance and shape the aesthetic experience, preparing the viewer for the encounter with the painting itself. Vitally, as responding to beauty did not require prior knowledge, the Neo-Renaissance frame's potency was not limited to the elite or traditional picture-owning classes but, arguably, could be equally accessible to all. This countered or balanced a critical pedagogy that was available only in the National Gallery's catalogues. But how were these beautiful borders employed in the form of Neo-Renaissance frames?

 Anthemion, Paris and Lock Furniture, Musée du Louvre, Paris (Wornum 1864, p. 45)

THE NEO-RENAISSANCE FRAME AND THE AESTHETIC ENCOUNTER

Carol Duncan has likened the underlying structure of the progress through a nineteenth-century art gallery to that of a pilgrimage, which followed a structured liturgical route culminating in a quasi-spiritual encounter with the transcendental and transformative. 120 Evidently, such a transforming ideal was no more than an ideal but it was an important justification for the public art museum. Christopher Whitehead reminds the reader that during the second reading of the National Gallery site Bill in 1856 the Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, recommended that the collections be relocated within a centralized matrix alongside the Design Schools and the Ornament Museum, to be used for the training of artisans through exemplars of manufacture. 121 His suggestion was rebutted by the National Gallery Reform Association led by Lord Elcho, 122 which argued that the paintings' transcendental and moral agency (i.e. aesthetic properties) would be weakened if they were incorporated with more functional works. 123 Whitehead's observations show that, despite Eastlake's interest in style and the development of art history, beauty remained of central importance at the National Gallery. Because eighteenth-century aesthetic theory clearly impacted on the conception of the Neo-Renaissance frames as objects perceived to be endowed with beauty, they can thus be positioned within a matrix of museological cues designed to facilitate the aesthetic experience.

In theory, framing the Neo-Renaissance frame should have been the complementary architecture of the National Gallery itself. However, the Wilkins' Building in which the Neo-Renaissance frames were placed was generally considered unsatisfactory, although of course it remained a wider frame. What were more clearly articulated, although perhaps no more successfully implemented, were the aims and responsibilities of the National Gallery as an institution. These aims and their underlying philosophy were extensively theorised in art journals and pamphlets and debated in the House of Commons between 1850 and 1876, owing to the prospect of a new National Gallery building and the

critical response to recently cleaned pictures in the 1840s.

Unifying the discussions concerning appropriate gallery design, acquisitions policy and modes of display were the perceived needs of the National Gallery's audience. ¹²⁶ In 1833, a year before he became Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel (1788–1850) had argued:

In present times of political excitement, the exacerbation of angry and unsocial feeling might be much softened by the effects which the fine arts produce on the minds of men ... The erection of the edifice [National Gallery] would not only contribute to the cultivation of the arts, but also to the cementing of bonds of union between the richer and poorer orders of state. ¹²⁷

In this utopian statement Peel was expressing the belief that the Government could use the fundamentally aesthetic encounter with beautiful paintings in the contemplative space of the National Gallery as an instrument for managing social unrest, following the Reform Act of 1832. These comments were not merely political rhetoric but were actually believed to be observable. Charles Kingsley described a street urchin, whose physiognomy became more beautiful as he gazed upon an artwork. I quote: 'how first wonder creeps over his rough face, and then a sweeter, more earnest, awestruck look ... [which] reflect unknowingly, the beauty of the picture he is studying'. ¹²⁸

In 1841 the stonemason-critic Allan Cunningham described in a similar vein the presence at the National Gallery of 'poor mechanics ... sitting wondering and marvelling over those fine works, and having no other feeling but that of pleasure or astonishment, they have no notion of destroying them'. ¹²⁹

When Cunningham was asked to elaborate further on the identity of the poor mechanics, he said that they were commonly referred to as the 'mob' but at the National Gallery, in the presence of paintings, they became men in possession of taste, cleansed of their miasma, worldly and threatening fallibilities. ¹³⁰

Ornament was viewed as a key means through which the aesthetic encounter could be rendered. Ruskin, for example, made an

explicit reference to ornament and the so-called ordinary viewer in the museum environment. Ruskin's revision of his earlier view of the public's ability to read architecture in the 1840s and 1850s has been attributed to his experience of the 'ordinary' spectator when he was a tourist. 131 In The Stones of Venice, he argued that the ordinary spectator could perceive and read symbolism in architecture. 132 The acknowledgment of the perceptual capabilities of such a spectator did not, however, extend to painting because, for Ruskin, judging painting was cognitive, while responding to architecture was instinctive. ¹³³ During a lecture at the British Institution in 1867, he argued that 'beautiful accompaniment' (I am reading this as ornament) honoured the artwork and prepared the mind of the spectator for its meaning. ¹³⁴ Furthermore, in *The Lamp of Beauty* Ruskin maintained that the application of beautiful ornament had to suit the space it occupied if it were to be effective. Suitability for Ruskin was a place where the mind was not engaged with worldly concerns or, put another way, 'where rest is forbidden so is beauty'. 135 While we have seen that Ruskin's opinions on ornamental style were not those of key protagonists at the National Gallery, his observations highlight a view that beautiful ornament could negotiate and strengthen the aesthetic encounter with the painting for the ordinary viewer. Neo-Renaissance frames, as beautiful ornament and ornamented beautifully, had a role to play in realising the civilising potential of the National Gallery interiors.

If we conveniently suspend our disbelief in the credibility of Wornum's ideology discussed above, we may view the cassetta frames ornamented with Cinquecento designs surrounding *The Virgin and Child with Supplicant* by Previtali (NG695) (Fig. 23) and Boccaccino's *Christ Carrying the Cross and the Virgin Swooning* (NG806) (Fig. 26) as an aesthetic arrangement of form and line. Once animated by light, these elements would have created clear juxtapositions with those areas not in relief. The juxtaposition between the leaf sight, in the instance of the Boccaccino reel-and-rod, and the low relief of the arabesque in both frames create, in Wornum's terms, a sense of 'variety' and 'contrast' and the repetition of the pattern is rhythmical. In Wornum's aesthetic philosophy these ornamental elements could activate a sense of repose in the mind of the viewer, a sense

of repose which could enhance their reception of Christ's dignified endurance of suffering depicted in *Christ Carrying the Cross and the Virgin Swooning* and, in the case of the Previtali, the sense of peace echoed in the tranquillity of the garden in the background. Neo-Renaissance frames and the paintings they surrounded may be conceived as symbiotically encouraging the instinctive aesthetic response so desired by members of the Government and National Gallery Trustees as well as by other critics, including Ruskin.

'BEAUTIFUL' FRAMES, COLLECTING AND DISPLAY

The role frames and framing played in framing-out controversy will be addressed in the Chapter 3. Here, I consider how Neo-Renaissance frames might have intervened in the reading of the paintings they surrounded through the concept of beauty. As my earlier comparison between Mackenzie's painting and the later interior photographs demonstrate, the National Gallery evolved considerably as an institution and setting for paintings, and under Eastlake's directorship, the direction of the National Gallery's acquisitions policy changed. Eastlake, with the support of Prince Albert and others, argued that the National Gallery should follow the German museological model and display works that lay outside of the eighteenth-century canon of taste, not least early Renaissance and medieval works. Although in collecting this category of art, the National Gallery was responding to a mid-nineteenth-century European vogue, the taste did not go uncontested and was viewed by some critics, and even by Eastlake, as fickle. 136 The extent to which Eastlake's collecting policy represented a real shift in focus is testified to by statistics relating to acquisitions. When Eastlake accepted the position of Keeper at the National Gallery in 1843, there were only four paintings executed 'before Raphael' in the collection. 137 A painting by Lorenzo Monaco purchased by Eastlake's successor as Keeper, Thomas Uwins in 1848 was regarded by Robert Peel as a 'curiosity'. 138 Although by 1830 there were works attributed to Botticelli in Paris, Berlin and the Accademia, there were no examples in the National Gallery or Royal Collection. ¹³⁹ By 1870, the Gallery had acquired a number of early Italian paintings, including a panel bought as a work by 'Spinello Arentino' (now catalogued as by Nardo di Cione, NG581) and another by 'Masaccio' (considered today as a work by Botticelli, NG626).

Eastlake's acquisitions policy could not simply be imposed on the National Gallery interior. Despite the death of Peel in 1850, Peelite ideology, particularly the importance of exposing the 'lower orders' to the transformative properties of paintings endured, through the taste of Gallery Trustees. Moreover, it could be argued that the young artists training in the Royal Academy Schools, should also have been exposed to beautiful works, rather than ugly ones. The Trustees also objected to the purchase of paintings with public money they viewed as ugly and maintained that it was indicative of a policy derived from Berlin which privileged scholarship over aesthetic pleasure. 140 Arguably, Neo-Renaissance frames mediated between the expectations of the National Gallery by its Trustees and the Government and the scholarly interests of men like Eastlake. For example, in the catalogue entries written by Eastlake and Wornum, the style of both Tura and Francesco del Cossa was described in Vasarian terms, as 'hard and dry'. Such descriptions suggest that works by these artists were not selected for their beauty but for their capacity to illustrate art-historical development. ¹⁴¹ Yet Tura's The Madonna and Child Enthroned (NG772) (Fig. 28) and Francesco del Cossa's Saint Vincent Ferrer (NG597) (Fig. 29) were both surrounded by 'beautiful' Cinquecento style frames. If the frames themselves were 'beautiful' and conceived of as possessing characteristics that could improve the mind and temper of the viewer, arguably they could secure (or indeed compensate for a lack of) the moral benefits and encouragement of taste, which may have been seen to have been forfeited by the display of socalled 'ugly' paintings.

A further manifestation of ugliness was the dismembered state of many of the panels acquired by the National Gallery. ¹⁴² For example *Saint Vincent Ferrer* by Francesco del Cossa had been the central panel of a Gothic polyptych dedicated to the Saint in San Petronio in Bologna. ¹⁴³ Tura's *The Virgin and Child Enthroned* would have been flanked by two wings and surmounted by a depiction

of the lamentation in the chapel of the Roverella family in San Giorgio fuori le mura in Ferrara¹⁴⁴ and Zanobi Machiavelli's *Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist* (NG587) is likely to have been a flanking or side panel to an altarpiece. ¹⁴⁵ The presence of Neo-Renaissance frames around these fragments of altarpieces disguises the fact that they had been violently cut from their original contexts and become the subject of commercial transactions and the art market before purchase by the National Gallery.

Nor were the problems associated with early Italian painting simply aesthetic. For Whitehead, the focus on style and biography in the National Gallery catalogues and, as we shall see, the 1853 *Plan for a Collection of Paintings, Illustrative of History of Art (Plan)*¹⁴⁶ written by Eastlake and Wornum, is an attempt to ensure that the viewers' interpretation did not veer towards interrogating the social function of the paintings on display. ¹⁴⁷ He reads both publications as a means of negotiating the central paradox that paintings were presumed to have moral agency but also had content that could be perceived as dangerous, such as the depiction of Greek decadence or Catholic doctrine. ¹⁴⁸ Of the two 'evils', perhaps Catholic doctrine was more dangerous.

A number of Eastlake's acquisitions were religious works, reflecting one of the most important functions of Renaissance painting, and which were, in turn, made more available by the suppression of religious institutions under Napoleon. ¹⁴⁹ Throughout this chapter, there have been hints that the content of the paintings at the National Gallery were considered to have dangerous potential. Wornum articulated a fear that religious symbolism might lead the viewer to 'foreign' and irreligious ends. As we shall see, Ruskin's analysis of Renaissance ornament is even more infused with Protestant prejudice against Catholic rites.

A fundamental tenet of both Protestantism and Anglicanism within it, was a fear of idolatry, through the use of religious images. The altar became a particularly sensitive issue during the 1840s, on account of the activities of the Oxford Movement and the Cambridge Camden Society. Both organisations sought to renew the Anglican faith with medieval liturgical principles. Some Anglican churches were thus transformed from preaching houses, where

the pulpit was the central feature, to medieval edifices where the altar (now on raised steps), and therefore the Eucharist, were of key importance. ¹⁵¹ The restoration of altars also necessitated liturgically suitable altar furnishings. Lighted candles, for example, were left on the altar with screens behind them. ¹⁵² Ceremonial innovations provoked riots, mainly during the 1840s, for example in Exeter in 1845 and 1848. However, these riots continued throughout the 1850s, notably in East Grinstead (1848-57), Saint Barnabus, Pimlico (1850-1), and St-George-in-the-East (1859-60). Furthermore, as late as 1874, following an investigation of so-called ritualism, a Public Worship Act was passed that Disraeli maintained would 'put down the Mass in Masquerade'. ¹⁵⁴ Arguably, the presence of beautiful frames around religious panels could neutralize these fears. This was made more potent by the fact that cassettas were employed more than all'antica frames and that the ornament had been used for secular goals at the South Kensington Museum.

WORNUM AND THE GOVERNMENT ART SCHOOLS: THE ECONOMIC FUNCTION OF THE NEO-RENAISSANCE FRAME

If the Neo-Renaissance as a style was not confined to the National Gallery, our understanding of Neo-Renaissance frames cannot be limited to its walls, particularly as Wornum had previously been engaged at South Kensington. By examining the role of ornament in wider debates on manufactures and in relationship to the South Kensington Museum, we may be able to account for the distinctive (namely their hyper legible ornament) and frequent appearance of Neo-Renaissance frames at the National Gallery.

Unlike its European counterparts, particularly the Louvre, the National Gallery was not founded during the eighteenth century. As such, although it broadly assumed an Enlightenment aesthetic, it also had to address contemporary concerns. One perceived audience for the National Gallery's collections was indicative of those concerns - the industrial working class, who contributed to the nation's economic well-being through the production of man-

ufactures. 155 The Report from the Select Committee on Arts and their Connections with Manufactures published in 1836 investigated how knowledge of the arts and principles of design could be brought to 'the people' and particularly the 'manufacturing population'. ¹⁵⁶ The Select Committee identified the 'fancy trade', 157 marred by the vulgarity of pervasive Louis XIV motifs, as a particular area for concern. This broad category included designs on silk and china, decorative architecture, furniture for interiors and frames. ¹⁵⁸ Appropriately ornamented design products were believed to have the capacity to improve the quality of industrially-produced manufactures and therefore increase trade by overtaking French competition. The Committee reached two major conclusions: institutions connected with the arts were to play a role in improving knowledge and execution of design, with the ornament depicted in some of the National Gallery paintings identified as a possible source of inspiration for designers and artisans. ¹⁵⁹ Famously, the Select Committee also recommended that a national organisation of Schools of Design be established and modelled on the Bavarian system with the remit of promoting good design in manufactures and improving public taste. 160 The report summarised the characteristics of the type of drawing encouraged in the Bavarian trade schools as bold (referring to strong outlines) and geometrical. ¹⁶¹ Arguably, if elements in the National Gallery's paintings were perceived to have sufficient agency to promote economic renewal through ornament, so might their frames.

Opinions on the aesthetic content of industrially-manufactured products ranged from Goethe's total refutation that they could possess any artistic or aesthetic merit to Diderot's argument in the *Encyclopediè* (1751) that they had demonstrable intellectual qualities. ¹⁶² Members of Sir Henry Cole's circle at South Kensington, including Wornum and Owen Jones, situated their teaching at the Design Schools and their writings on decorative arts in this latter category. Presumably this decision was an attempt to remove the barriers that separated the practice of design and therefore decorative art from that of high art. Ornament, which followed principles, was conceived to be the chief means of realizing this goal. ¹⁶³ Wornum wrote: 'ornament has been discovered to be again an

essential element of commercial prosperity ... ornament is now as material an interest as cotton itself'. ¹⁶⁴ The ornamental feature favoured above all others on account of its plant-like qualities was the so-called arabesque. *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856) edited by Jones and sponsored by the Government Design Education Department, under the wider auspices of the *Department of Science and Art*, ¹⁶⁵ explains why what Jones termed the arabesque - the specific example being (once again) that on the portal pilasters sculpted by the Lombardi family at Santa Maria de' Miracoli in Venice - represented the ideal embodiment of ornamental beauty to figures in the British Government. ¹⁶⁶

According to Owen Jones, good ornament adhered to or reflected the same laws that regulated the appearance of nature. ¹⁶⁷ These rules included the essentially classical trio of 'fitness, proportion and harmony', which combined to create a sense of repose in the viewer. Owen Jones described repose in the same terms as the eighteenth-century concept of aesthetic disinterestedness, as a state reached 'when the eye and the intellect' are free from any 'want'. ¹⁶⁸ The replication of the natural world required that, as with plants, lines must flow from the parent stem, ¹⁶⁹ creating balance and contrast between 'the straight, the inclined, and the curved'. ¹⁷⁰ The non-Western arabesque with its characteristic natural forms radiating and undulating from a single stem embodied just such principles of beauty.

Tangible examples of beauty were available close to home at the South Kensington Museum, established with the profits from the Great Exhibition of 1851 and part of the London School of Design. The selectors, Henry Cole, Owen Jones and Richard Redgrave made their choices based on what they felt possessed demonstrable beauty, i.e. that which conformed to the 'laws and principles in Ornamental Art'. There was, however, a Renaissance, indeed specifically Cinquecento, bias which was manifested in sculptures, prints and drawings, casts and ceramics. The Prince Albert, who had a decisive influence on the arts, trade and industry, anticipated that the Museum would be open to the widest public, displaying exhibits that were intended to teach by example.

contextualising the National Gallery's Neo-Renaissance frames, are the ornamental panels cast from architectural components of Santa Maria dei Miracoli, Venice, acquired in 1851 (sketching from them was part of the Design School curriculum from 1852), ¹⁷⁵ and copies after Raphael's decorations for the Vatican *loggie* purchased in 1842. ¹⁷⁶ These examples illustrate the importance of models intended to stimulate the imaginative but principled delineation of ornament. Furthermore, they enable one to argue that the National Gallery's Neo-Renaissance frames may also be viewed as part of Cole's South Kensington ideology.

We can interpret the taste for the Cinquecento not simply as a means of creating national wealth but once again of improving morals. The principles of both Jones and Wornum were reliant on Cole's *Maxims* for Students of Design, which had first been published in *The Journal of Arts and Manufactures* (1849–1852). There Cole argued that the sense of 'beauty' that arose from the adherence to these principles was important not only because the commercial value it added to manufactures would extend to 'tens of thousands', including artists, designers and artisans, but also because the moral impact of beauty would reach 'millions'. The effects of beauty were, according to Cole, 'admiration and love, whether of virtue or of visible and sensible nature', qualities he viewed as vital in 'good citizens'. 1779

And it is here that we can understand the hyper-legible characteristics of the Neo-Renaissance frames. If we turn to the frame made by Henry Critchfield during this period for *Saint Vincent Ferrer* by Francesco del Cossa (NG597) (Fig. 29), we notice that its ornamentation is more restrained and crisply delineated compared to the *impasto* decoration on the period Renaissance frames around Carlo Crivelli's *La Madonna della Rondine* (NG724.1) (Fig. 20) or Giovanni Bellini's *Doge Leonardo Loredan* (NG189) (Fig. 40). 'Excrescences', as Jones would have termed them, are also missing from the Neo-Renaissance frames. This clarity can be linked to the fact that Wornum admired what he saw as the 'purest' forms of beauty and abhorred eclecticism. The legibility of the ornament might then be viewed as an attempt to ensure that its 'beautiful' properties were not compromised by any unnecessary distractions. Their legibility



 Giovanni Bellini, Doge Leonardo Loredan, about 1501-2, National Gallery, London (Venetian sixteenth-century tabernacle frame with added entablature)

would also, in theory, be easy to copy, adhering to the geometric and bold outline drawing taught at the Design Schools and adopted from the German model discussed previously (although they were executed in composition like the plaster casts, one doesn't really expect that the frames were ever sketched). This analysis enables us to bring the form and the functions of the Neo-Renaissance frame together. To idealist nineteenth-century reformers of taste who, on account of transmission-stimuli-based pedagogy, viewed audiences as passive receptors, the display of beautiful ornament at the National Gallery, could refine the minds of the manufacturing classes, transforming in turn to the quality of the manufactures they produced and the minds of those who used their manufactures. In short, Enlightenment theories of beauty were adapted for the needs of the industrial world. This created a frame that might be posited

as democratic because it could be read intuitively and because its ornament fitted with the ideology of the South Kensington Museum, which was open to all. The notion that the Neo-Renaissance frame could have an economic and social impact also emphasises its secular character that could, in some broader sense, 'contain', even restrain, the sacred image in the National Gallery environment.

RUSKIN AND THE RENAISSANCE

Up until now 'the Renaissance' has been presented as an unproblematic and uncontroversial term. However, Neo-Renaissance frames were developed while the term Renaissance was being constructed and its relevance and implications questioned. Furthermore, the philosophy and methods of the Government Schools of Design and South Kensington were not uniformly accepted. One of the Design School's critics was John Ruskin who argued that, like Greek and Renaissance architects, English arbiters of taste (i.e. the Design Schools) privileged perfection of form over the expression of individuality and invention in ornament, rendering executors merely 'machines' forced to imitate and repeat patterns. ¹⁸⁰

For Ruskin, the external forms of architecture were tied to internal expressions, which he maintained expressed both the mind of the maker and their relationship to the political sphere. ¹⁸¹ Ruskin divided the 'mental and moral' elements into three categories: 'servile', 'constitutional' and 'revolutionary'. 182 For Ruskin, the 'servile' was most evident in the Greek, Ninevite and Egyptian styles, on account of an intolerance of the imperfect and adherence to lines and rules, that could be copied without difficulty. 183 Servility led to a state where 'execution or power of the inferior workman is entirely subjected to the intellect of the higher'. 184 In contrast, the 'constitutional' equated to a situation where there was a balance between freedom of expression of the executor and their yielding to 'higher powers'. 185 For Ruskin, the constitutional was best expressed in medieval architecture (Gothic) as it was produced, he believed, without the need for slavish copying, echoing Christian tolerance of imperfection in the souls of its faithful.¹⁸⁶ The advantage of imperfection was that the workman could imbue his carving with 'variety', 'love' and 'humility', which Ruskin thought the onlooker could instinctively read and somehow imbibe.¹⁸⁷

For Ruskin, Renaissance design was also indicative of a wider servile culture. Ornament was applied with no distinction between minor and major detail, resulting in a 'wearisome exhibition of well-educated impeccability' and rendering the craftsman a slave. Ruskin readily slipped from analysing the formal qualities of Renaissance ornament to the context in which it was employed. He argued that degraded 'classic and Renaissance' ornament used in a Roman Catholic context was all surface work. Any real expression of true faith was concealed by tinsel and glitter, which 'celebrated the world of man not that created by God'. Wornum disagreed with this point, describing the claim that Gothic architecture was essentially Christian architecture as 'preposterous', stating that 'Doric has as much claim to be styled Christian architecture as Gothic'. 190

Ruskin wrote in the appendix of *The Stones of Venice* that this type of Roman art should not be encouraged in England, stating: 'It is of the highest importance, in these days, that Romanism should be deprived of the miserable influence which pomp and picturesqueness has given it over the weak sentimentalism of English people'. ¹⁹¹

Renaissance ornament being, according to Ruskin, unconstitutional and Catholic could therefore be conceived as an inappropriate lens through which to view paintings offering supposed moral benefits. Moreover, Ruskin's arguments refuted Wornum's notion that ornament could ever be cleansed of its symbolic readings. These arguments could rupture the perception of the National Gallery as an aesthetically purified space and Neo-Renaissance frames as manifestations of beauty and inspiration for the production of good ornament.

However, even Ruskin was not absolute in his tastes, maintaining 'I do not like those arabesques' when referring to those by Raphael in Rome, but praising the flower and *convolvulus* arabesque on the portal of the Church of San Giobbe in Venice. ¹⁹²

Certain forms of Cinquecento ornament, particularly the arabesque, seem, then, to have been generally accepted as beautiful and instinctively comprehensible. This echoed, in theory at least, the desired accessibility of the National Gallery's paintings to all, heightened through the intuitively intelligible ornament forming the Neo-Renaissance frame.

CONCLUSION

Frames and framing were clearly fundamental to expectations of 'good' display in this period. But this chapter has unearthed a rich variety of metanarratives which show that Neo-Renaissance frames performed a far more complex variety of roles under the leadership of Eastlake at the National Gallery and Keepership of Wornum, highlighting their dialogical nature. My observations show that just as early nineteenth-century collectors' frames engaged with the interior of the room, rather than the painting, Neo-Renaissance frames also engaged with the external, both the immediate context of the museum environment and the wider socio-economic and religious situation. This research finding reflects the extrinsic nature of the non-original frame, which never truly 'belonged' to the artwork, but consciously pulled the panels into the present. Furthermore, Wornum was engaging with a fully developed theory of decorative art, in which the frame through ornament could legitimately be seen as not only on a par with fine art but also valued independently of it. Neo-Renaissance frames thus had a heightened degree of autonomy. They were next to, but not integrated with, paintings and within, but not physically part of, the National Gallery interior. It would seem that far from separating the inside from the outside or the ergon (work) and parergon (not-the-work), Neo-Renaissance frames represent an attempt to link paintings with the outside, rather than framing out anything external to the artwork. However, like any other frame, they re-presented fictive images for inspection and acted as a border which remained fundamental to the rendering of the aesthetic experience and protecting the aesthetic qualities of the painting.

But what did Neo-Renaissance frames do to images in terms of their sacred nature? In most instances the cassetta form was adopted rather than the more obviously religious all'antica frame. Although it is not stated, Wornum's claims that ornament could be used aesthetically enabled decorative motifs, taken from Italian churches and associated with Roman Catholicism, to be used on frames, when issues surrounding faith were particularly sensitive. The Neo-Renaissance frames thus struck a calculated balance, being reminiscent of Renaissance frames, while not being copies, and indeed being executed in an ornamental style that had become so commonplace, that it could not be perceived as threatening. The fact that the ornament used was also associated with commerce through the Design Schools, might have strengthened claims that there were no religious overtones to its use. When they are seen in this light, Neo-Renaissance frames may be viewed as an in-between stage, bridging the transition from the collectors' frame to the historicizing frame.

In theoretical terms, Neo-Renaissance frames in dialogue with the rest of the National Gallery interior and the paintings themselves had the potential, through beauty, to transform the individual and the economy and, for Ruskin, even to restore appropriate constitutional values. However, it remained, alongside many other ambitions of the National Gallery, a theoretical concept. The room plans illustrated in Henry Blackburn's Pictorial Notes in the National Gallery (1877) show that the Neo-Renaissance frames were interspersed with works in collectors' frames, Sansovino frames and indeed Gothic frames. The mixed nature of the display space must have weakened any theoretical concepts that Neo-Renaissance frames could act as museological cues. Regardless, something about their ornament clearly appealed to certain audiences. Indeed, similar ornamental styles were used by contemporary artists to frame their paintings, especially members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who are known to have copied paintings in the Gallery. 193



- [1] See, for example, Bonython, *The Great Exhibitor*, 2003.
- [2] See Appendix 2 for Critchfield.
- [3] Jameson, *Public Galleries of Art*, 1842, 13-14. Quoted in Whitehead, *Public Art Museum*, 2005a, 16-17.
- [4] For the connection between German and English display, see Avery-Quash and Crookham, 'Art Beyond the Nation', 2014, 165-178.
- [5] Jameson 1842, 13.
- [6] NG5/137/1: Anon., 'The National Gallery', 1859, 354.
- [7] *Ibid*.
- [8] NGA1/1/70/8: RNW to WB, 15 June 1873. In response to Russell's objection to a frame being ordered without the Trustees consent, Wornum wrote to Boxall, 'This is quite a new principle'.
- [9] Evidence of this can be seen in NGA2/3/2/13: Ralph Nicholson Wornum's Diary, henceforth RNW Diary.
- [10] Wright 2004, cat. no 54, 523.
- [11] On the 5 March 1870 Giovanni Morelli wrote to his cousin Melli explaining that, on account of the additional tax (20% or 300L), he had 'sacrificed frames'. Anderson, Collecting Connoisseurship and the Art Market in Risorgimento Italy, 1999, 89–91.
- [12] RNW Diary, 19 January 1866. The painting had been purchased from the Doge's descendant, Count Alvise Mocenigo di Sant'Eustachio.
- [13] NG5/139/7: CLE to RNW, 23 October 1860.
- [14] NGA2/3/3/85: RNW to CLE, 7 December 1864.
- [15] Anderson, 'Introduction. Otto Mündler and his Travel Diary', 1985, 22.
- [16] Layard, Handbook of Painting, 1887, xxi.
- [17] Hoeniger, 'Attention to detail in the Study and Preservation of Raphael's Art During the Nineteenth Century', 2011, 302.
- [18] Cited in Ibid.
- [19] Pavoni, Reviving the Renaissance, 1997, 5.
- [20] Callmann, 'William Blundell Spence', 1999, 338.
- [21] Ibid., 344.
- [22] Alpers, 'The Museum as a Way of Seeing', 1991, 26-27.
- [23] Fraser 1992, 1.
- [24] *Ibid.*, 95.
- [25] Bennett, The Birth of the Museum, 1995, 6.
- [26] Charles Barry introduced the Neo-Renaissance to England with his design for the Travellers Club, Pall Mall (1829–1832).
- [27] Bertelli et al., Raffaello e Brera, 1984, cat no. 1, 33-34.
- [28] The earliest example Penny cites is the frame, signed and dated by Angiolo Barbetti of Siena and Florence (1805–77) in 1839 (See 'The Study and Imitation of Old Picture-Frames', 1998, 377). A further example of a Neo-Renaissance frame can be consulted in Penny's archive. It is documented as being by Giuseppe Fasso

- and is located in the Duomo at Novara, surrounding an altarpiece by Gaudezio Ferrari (circa. 1525–30). Penny dates the frame to about 1880.
- [29] Frank 2000, xi.
- [30] Moritz, 'On the concept of self-sufficient perfection', (1793) 2000, 34.
- [31] Cole (ed.), 'The Frame', 1850, 142.
- [32] Simmel (1902) 1994, 11.
- [33] *Ibid*.
- [34] *Ibid*.
- [35] *Ibid*.
- [36] *Ibid*.
- [37] Ibid. 12.
- [38] Ortega y Gasset (2008), 17.
- [39] *Ibid*.
- [40] *Ibid*.
- [41] *Ibid*.
- [42] Ibid., 16.
- [43] Beardsley, 'Some persistent issues in aesthetics', 1982. Also
 Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, *The Art of Seeing*, 1990,
 Discussed in Whitehead 2012, 14-15.
- [44] Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson 1990, 11. Discussed in Whitehead 2012, 14-15.
- [45] *Ibid*.
- [46] Ibid., 12-13.
- [47] Ibid., 14.
- [48] *Ibid.*, 15.
- [49] Duncan borrows the term 'liminal' from the Belgian folklorist Arnold van Gennep and developed by Victor Turner. It suggests a form of consciousness outside daily life, which fits with modern Western notions of the aesthetic experience. Duncan, Civilizing Rituals, 1995, 11.
- [50] *Ibid.*, xi
- [51] Hooper-Greenhill, Museums and Interpretation of Visual Culture, 2000, 14.
- [52] Ibid., 129.
- [53] Hooper-Greenhill 2000, 130. This model was critiqued by the sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel (*The Love of Art*, 1991, 39). They argued that understanding based purely on looking at an object through the lens of aesthetics was only available to those in possession of cultural capital.
- [54] Whitehead outlines that between 1848 and 1861, the National Gallery was subject to 5 government enquiries, requiring hundreds of witnesses. There were clear political motivations for collecting and display. See Whitehead, 'Establishing the Manifesto', 2007, 56.
- [55] See NG15/3: Report from the Select Committee on Arts and their Connections with Manufactures.
- [56] Snodin and Styles, *Design and the Decorative Arts*, 2004, 43 and 54.

- [57] Houghton, Frames for the Oil Paintings from the J.M.W. Turner Bequest, 2008.
- [58] Helsinger, Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder, 1982, 204.
- [59] RNW Diary. Wornum's diary testifies to the importance of ornament in frames at the National Gallery. In August 1865 he wrote: 'ordered a frame for the two so-called Memlings, of a gothic design, the principal ornament being taken out of the picture themselves'.
- [60] On the 2 April 1824 the House of Commons had voted £60,000 for the purchase of Angerstein's 38 paintings. Shortly afterwards, William Seguier was appointed as Keeper. See Baker and Henry, *National Gallery*, 1995, x-xx.
- [61] Louisa Davey identified the Holwell Carr frame type, in conversation with the author, 5 June 2011. An example of this frame type can be found surrounding Giovanni Battista Viola, *Landscape with a Hunting Party* (NG63). The painting and the Holwell Carr frame can be seen in Frederick Mackenzie's *The National Gallery when at Mr I. J. Angerstein's House, Pall Mall.*
- [62] Whitehead 2005a, 4 and Waterfield, *Palaces of Art*, 1992, 49–57. It should be noted that this approach to hanging was not entirely dependent on eighteenth-century domestic hangs, see for example Apsley House. There is scope to undertake further research on how Renaissance panels were re-framed in the eighteenth century.
- [63] Whitehead 2005a, 5.
- [64] In 1843 the National Gallery had 200 pictures, all of which reflected aristocratic taste, e.g., artists such as Correggio, Titian, Rubens and Rembrandt. In 1853, the Trustee Lord Aberdeen maintained that 'there was no system at all; the question of forming a national collection hardly existed; [the nation] had bought the Angerstein collection, and the object was to preserve it'. NG15/10 Select Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Management of the National Gallery, 1853, para 5286; see also Whitehead 2005a, 3.
- [65] Whitehead 2005a, 22-23.
- [66] For an example see Penny, *The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings*, 2004, 25.
- [67] NG7/442/1: Benson 'Notes on Frames', 1914, 46.
- [68] RNW Diary, 9 March 1859.
- [69] For a general discussion of English nineteenth-century framing see Roberts, 'Nineteenth Century English Picture Frames I, 1985, 155–172.
- [70] Bode, 'Die Ausstattung der Gemälde im Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum mit Alten Rahmen', 1912.
- [71] For descriptions of Pitti and Dresden frames see Appendix
- [72] NGA2/3/3/81: CLE to RNW, 19 August 1861.
- [73] NG1/1: Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1828-1847, 25 January 1847, 315.
- [74] Wornum and Caldesi, The Pictures by the Old Masters, 1872.

- [75] The publication seems only to have been mentioned in a footnote to R.N. Wornum's entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.
- [76] Sixteenth-century examples of the arabesque can also be found on Sansovino's frieze on the tomb of Ascanio Sforza, Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome and in the saloon of Anna of Austria, Fontainebleau. See Stockbauer, 'The Arabesque of the Italian Renaissance', 1875, for further discussion of the subject.
- [77] See Penny 2004, 25. This pattern was also applied to Michelangelo's *Manchester Madonna* (NG809) and Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio's *The Virgin and Child* (NG728). The earliest reference to this frame type was made by Wornum, when he noted in his diary that the Boltraffio was hung in its new frame on 1 October 1863. I cannot find any archival references to the use of this frame type after 1870 nor an example of it surrounding a painting acquired after this date.
- [78] Wornum noted in his diary entry for 9 March 1859 that both Saint Francis of Assisi with Angels by Botticelli (NG598) and Bellini's Madonna of the Meadows (then attributed Basaiti and entitled The Infant Christ Asleep on the Lap of the Virgin (NG599) were framed. This pattern was also applied to Saint Francis of Assisi with Angels by Botticelli (NG598) and The Virgin and Child in a Mandorla with Cherubim by a follower of Perugino (NG702).
- [79] Identical reel-and-rod mouldings were used to frame Crivelli's Saint Mary Magdalen and Saint Catherine of Alexandria (NG907.1 and 907.2), the Portrait of a Gentleman possibly by Domenico Tintoretto (NG173), Saint Peter Martyr and a Bishop Saint (Saint Evasio?) from The Dal Ponte Polyptych by Giovanni Martino Spanzotti (NG1200 and NG1201), Scipione Pulzone's Portrait of a Cardinal (NG1048), The Virgin in Prayer by Sassoferrato (NG200), Bonsignori, Portrait of an Elderly Man (NG736) and Cima's Christ Crowned with Thorns (NG1310). The presence of reel-and-rod is recorded on Caldesi's photographs around Crivelli's The Vision of the Blessed Gabriele (NG668) and Tura's St Jerome (NG773).
- [80] See 'Levi Survey' for further details on date. The frame pattern was also applied to *The Virgin and Child with Saints* attributed to Giovanni Martini da Udine (NG778) and *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* by Gerolamo dai Libri (NG748).
- [81] Penny 2004, 127.
- [82] This pattern can also be found on Zanobi Machiavelli's Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist (NG 587) and The Virgin and Child by Lorenzo di Credi (NG 593).
- [83] A similar pattern was also applied to Previtali's *The Virgin* and Child with Saint Catherine of Alexandria and Saint John the Baptist (NG1409) and Piazza's Saint John the Baptist in

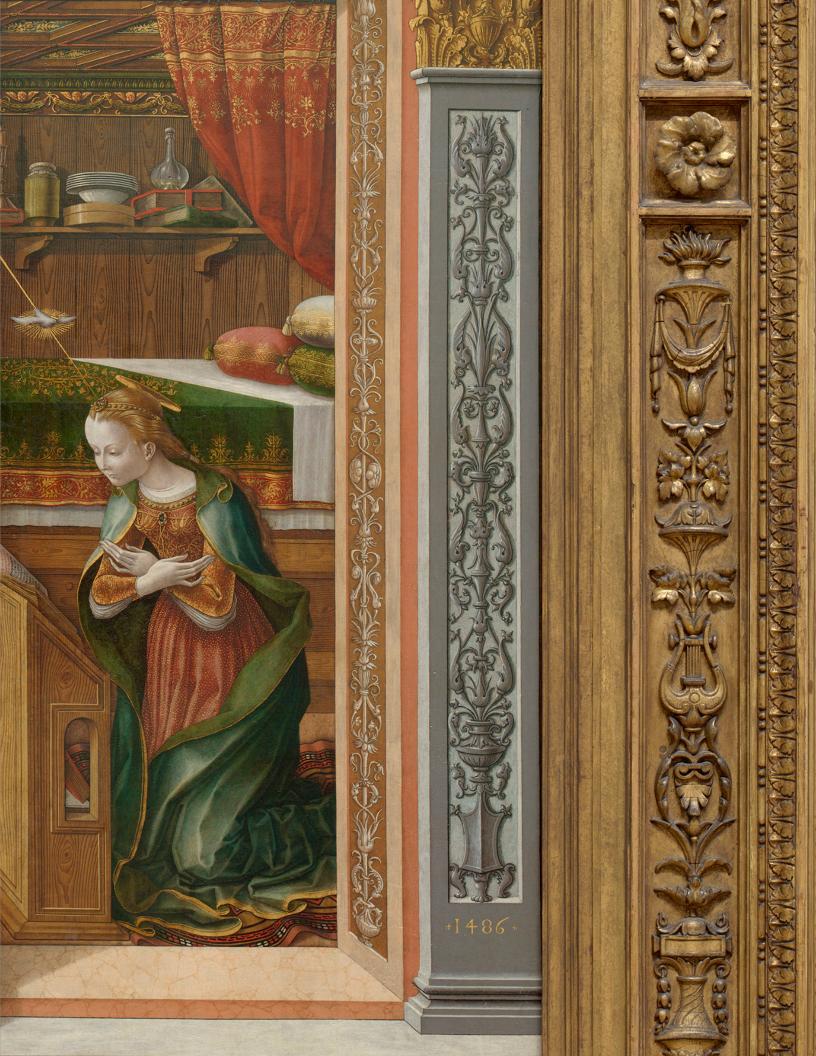
- the Desert (NG1152).
- [84] This pattern was also applied to Piero della Francesca's *The Baptism of Christ* (NG665) and *Nativity* panels (NG908).
- [85] Wornum, Catalogue of Ornamental Casts, 185, 34-35.
- [86] See Luchs, The Mermaids of Venice, 2010, 103.
- [87] Wornum 185, 26.
- [88] Northern European paintings were framed in distinctive, broadly 'Gothic' style black and gold frames. Examples of this frame type can still be seen around Netherlandish, *The Virgin and Child* (NG265) and Swabian, *Portrait of a Woman* (NG722). See Davey 2012–13, NG265 for further archival references. Paintings from the British School were framed in neo–Rococo and neo–Classical style frames. Examples of these frame types can be found around paintings from the Turner bequest, for example Turner, *The Parting of Hero and Leander* (NG521).
- [89] Republished by Anon, 'The National Gallery' in *The Architect*, 1876. Cited in Whitehead 2005a, 239.
- [90] Wornum and Eastlake 1877, 238.
- [91] There is no archival evidence to support this judgment, however the frame does not fit with the frames the National Gallery commissioned in this period and reflects the art historical interests of Eastlake and his circle. Penny assumes that the frame was commissioned by Eastlake. See Penny 1997, 57.
- [92] Avery-Quash 2011a, 34. 5r.
- [93] Penny posits that they might have been made in Venice, in conversation with the author.
- [94] See entry to Andrea Busatti in Baker and Henry 1995, 81.
- [95] Penny 2004, 376. BL MSS 38964 fol. 18r: Letters from Morelli to Layard from 1 July – 3 September 1881.
- [96] Anderson, 'The First Cleaning Controversy at the National Gallery', 1990, 6.
- [97] Hoeniger, 'Heritage preservation', 2011a, 265-271.
- [98] See Gordon, *The Fifteenth Century Italian Paintings*, 2003, 296 and 299.
- [99] Ibid., 299.
- [100] Consult the National Gallery conservation dossier for further information on the restoration of this painting.
- [101] This frame can be compared to the frame Lord Leighton had designed for around *Preparing for a Festa* of 1851 (now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford). The frame included roundel medals of Arnolfo di Cambio, Giovanni di Lapo Ghini and Brunelleschi (the architects of Florence Cathedral). For further information on this frame see Roberts, *Victorian High Renaissance*, 1986.
- [102] RNW Diary. Wornum worked closely with Eastlake on the design of some frames, one example being that surrounding Lorenzo Costa's *The Virgin and Child with Saints Peter, Philip, John the Evangelist and the John the Baptist* (NG629.1-5). On 8 December 1859, Wornum

- noted that he had 'made a design for the frame for the Lorenzo Costa'. Eastlake responded in a letter to Wornum writing, 'I quite approve of the proposed frame for the Costa. At all events the division should be proportioned with the external frame as to present one altarpiece with sub dividers not as new separated pictures'. $NG_5/302/3$: CLE to RNW, 14 December 1859.
- [103] Wornum, Analysis of Ornament, 1856, 5.
- [104] Wornum 1854, 14.
- [105] Wornum 1856, 8.
- [106] Ibid.
- [107] Ibid., 9. Wornum's belief in universal ornamental principles or laws differed from Kant's arguments on the subject. Kant maintained that designers followed the law of their own nature rather than universal laws. For further discussion see Collinson, 'Aesthetic Experience', 1992, 140.
- [108] Wornum 1856, 24.
- [109] Ibid., 88.
- [110] *Ibid.*, 101.
- [111] Alberti, On Painting and On Sculpture, 1972, 35 and 40.
- [112] Moritz 2000, 34.
- [113] Wornum, An Account of the Library of the Division of Art, 1855, 11.
- [114] Bredin and Santoro-Brienza, *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*, 2000, 86.
- [115] Hegel wrote, 'In the second form of art, which we propose to call *Classical*, the double defect of symbolic art is cancelled. The plastic shape of symbolic art is imperfect, because, in the first place, the Idea in it only enters into consciousness in *abstract* determinateness or indeterminateness, and, in the second place, this must always make the conformity of shape to import defective, and in its merely abstract. G.W. Hegel, *Introductory Lectures*, 2004, 84.
- [116] Wornum 1856, 5.
- [117] Bredin and Santoro-Brienza 2000.
- [118] Collinson 1992, 138.
- [119] Ibid.
- [120] Duncan 1995, 12.
- [121] Whitehead 2005a, 157.
- [122] Lord Elcho was a stylised form of Francis Richard Charteris, 10th Earl of Wemyss (4 August 1818–30 June 1914).
- [123] Whitehead 2005a, 155.
- [124] Its architect William Wilkins (1778–1839) had wanted to create a correctly proportioned Greek building but for practical and economic reasons the end result of 1838 was a compromise. In 1867 a public competition was held to find a design for a total rebuilding of the National Gallery. However Gladstonian economy meant that the winner, E.M. Barry only built a sequence of rooms behind the East Wing. See Conlin 2006, esp. 369.
- [125] For further discussion of the museum as a framing insti-

- tution see McClellan, Inventing the Louvre, 1994, 12.
- [126] Whitehead 2005a, xiii.
- [127] Hansard 1833, xiv, 664, quoted in Whitehead 2005a, 5.
- [128] Kingsley, 'The National Gallery No. 1', 1848. Cited in Conlin 2006, 228.
- [129] See NG15/8: Report from the Select Committee, 184, 4, question 1849. Quoted in Hooper-Greenhill 2000, 26 and Conlin 2006, 222.
- [130] Ibid.
- [131] Helsinger 1982, 204.
- [132] Ibid., 203.
- [133] Quoted in Fishman, The Interpretation of Art, 1963, 37.
- [134] Cook and Wedderburn, *The Works of John Ruskin*, 1903-12, 226.
- [135] Ruskin, The Lamp of Beauty, (1849) 2000, 47.
- [136] Haskell, Rediscoveries in Art, 1980, 21.
- [137] Ames, Prince Albert, 1968, 126.
- [138] *Ibid.*, 136. Prince Albert and Victoria advanced the taste for early Italian and Renaissance art during the 1840s.
- [139] Levey, 'Botticelli and Nineteenth-Century England', 1960, 297.
- [140] MacGregor, 'A Pentecost in Trafalgar Square', 2004, 28.
- [141] Wornum and Eastlake 1877, 325.
- [142] Levi, "Let Agents be Sent to All Cities of Italy", 2005, 33.
- [143] Dunkerton et al., Giotto to Dürer, 1991, 302.
- [144] Ibid., 328-329. Also Campbell, Cosmè Tura of Ferrara, 1997,87.
- [145] Baker and Henry 1995, 400.
- [146] It was published as an appendix to the Report of the Select Committee of the same year.
- [147] Whitehead 2007, 50.
- [148] Ibid., 57.
- [149] See Avery-Quash, 'The Growth of Interest in Early Italian Painting in Britain', 2003, xxv-xxxix.
- [150] Rowell, The Vision Glorious, 1983, 98.
- [151] Yates, The Oxford Movement and Anglican Ritualism, 1983, 15.
- [152] Ibid., 26.
- [153] Yates 1983, 26.
- [154] Ibid., 31.
- [155] Although the contents of the guidebooks and absence of labels until 1856 suggest that accessibility was not implemented in practice.
- [156] NG15/3: Arts and their Connections with Manufactures, 1836, ii.
- [157] Ibid., iii.
- [158] Ibid.
- [159] Ibid. I.e. Westminster Abbey.
- [160] Morris, Inspiration for Design, 1996, 9.
- [161] Ibid., v.
- [162] Frank 2000, 131.

- [163] *Ibid.*, 131.
- [164] Wornum 1854, 3.
- [165] The Department was formed in 1853. See Snodin and Styles 2004, 40 and Burton, *Vision and Accident*, 1999, 10.
- [166] Jones, The Grammar of Ornament, 1856, 124.
- [167] Ibid., preface. That whenever any style of ornament commands universal admiration, it will always be found to be in accordance with the laws which regulate the distribution of form in nature. However varied the manifestations in accordance with these laws, the leading ideas on which they are based are very few. I. Laws of evolution 'That modifications and development which have taken place from one style to another have been caused by a sudden throwing off of some fixed trammel, which set thought free for a time till the new idea, like the old, became again fixed, to give birth in turn to fresh invention'. 2. Last turn to nature for fresh inspiration.
- [168] *Ibid.*, 4.
- [169] Ibid., 12.
- [170] *Ibid.*, 10.
- [171] Morris 1996, 7.
- [172] See Cole Jones Redgrave 1851, iv.
- [173] Morris 1996, 32.
- [174] Plessen, 'Art and Design for All', 2011, 16. See for example Henry Cole's 'Chamber of Horrors' of 1852.
- [175] Vandenbrouck-Przybylski, 'Reproductions and Reference Collections', 2011, 198.
- [176] Evans, 'Raphael and Pre-Raphael', 2011, 66.
- [177] Cole (ed.), 'Maxims of Students of Design', 1852, 131.
- [178] Cole, 'Address', 1849, 1-4.
- [179] Cole, 'Address', 1851, 170.
- [180] Ruskin, The Nature of the Gothic, (1928) 1932, 12-13.
- [181] *Ibid.*, 3.
- [182] *Ibid*.
- [183] *Ibid.*, 9.
- [184] *Ibid.*, 3.
- [185] Ibid., 7.
- [186] Ibid., 9.
- [187] Ibid., 25.
- [188] *Ibid.*, 9.
- [189] Ruskin, The Stones of Venice, 1893, 205.
- [190] See Wornum, 'Modern Moves in Art', 1850, 3.
- [191] Ruskin 1893, 370.
- [192] Ruskin 1893, III.
- [193] Roberts 1985.

Detail of the Neo-Renaissance frame for Carlo Crivelli's *The Annunciation with Saint Emidius*, 1486, National Gallery, London





III Frames from Italy: Re-framing and connoisseurship, 1850-1880

The previous chapter examined the relationship between the ornamented Neo-Renaissance frames commissioned by the National Gallery in the mid-nineteenth century and government-led rhetoric advocating the cleansing and civilising agency of museums and art galleries. This research highlighted the important role that frames and framing played in the construction of the aesthetic experience in the museum and alerted us to the fact that in terms of creating some kind of historical context for Renaissance painting, these frames were, at best, considered as historically appropriate in undefined terms and that their characterisation as 'beautiful' was far more important, and indeed useful, to the National Gallery.

Here, the acquisition from Italy, between 1850 and 1880, of both old and new frames for Italian Renaissance paintings will be analysed alongside the interventions made to them in England by the National Gallery's frame-maker, Henry Critchfield. My aim is to alert readers to the contrast between the growing historical understanding of frames and their styles in this period and the apparent lack of historic specificity that permeates re-framing.

Detail of the frame's entablature for Andrea Busati's The Entombment (see Fig. 37) This chapter will thus consider how re-framing activity might be read alongside the latter part of Mrs Jameson's statement on the roles and functions given to the National Gallery between 1850 and 1880, outlined in the previous chapter.

By maintaining that the visitor to the National Gallery should be made aware of the context in which works of art had been originally made and displayed, Jameson was anticipating the arguments put forward by Gustav Waagen in his essay in the *Art Journal* (1851) on the ideal arrangements of the National Gallery. He wrote:

It is ... the duty of those entrusted with the arrangement of Museums, to lessen as much as possible the contrast which must necessarily exist between works of Art in their original site, and in their position in a museum ... to realise in some degree the impression produced by a temple, a church, a palace, or a cabinet, for which those works were originally intended, and where a certain general harmony reigned.¹

That Waagen and Jameson had overlapping, but by no means identical, opinions on the priorities of museological display is unsurprising. Jameson wrote the introduction to the English translation of Waagen's Peter Paul Rubens (1840) and was familiar with developing German art historical methods, having visited Munich.² All'antica and cassetta frames would have been able to suggest to those with some understanding of the subject, something of the first context and use of the paintings on display, but they were not used as such, potentially because of the controversy the acquisition of their contents provoked. Instead, the key concern in relation to frames as manifestations of the developing discipline of art history, was the role they could play in enabling the panels to be properly seen, not only by the working classes who formed a large part of my discussion in Chapter 2, but by artists, art historians and connoisseurs. The alignment of frames with art history ensured not only the viewer's correct perception of the stylistic qualities of the artwork they were examining, but also challenged, through the fact that they were well displayed, more controversial associations regarding authenticity.



Frames, art history and connoisseurship

In the preface to the pioneering *Descriptive and Historical Catalogue* of the Pictures in the National Gallery, which, as we saw in Chapter 2, promoted a specifically museological and connoisseurial form of art history, Wornum advised the user to note the information about the artist inscribed on the frames and then to read the respective entries in the catalogue (Fig. 41).³ He wrote: 'In using this catalogue in the Gallery, reference should be made from the painter's name on the frame ... to the corresponding name at the head of the page'.⁴

Although Wornum acknowledged that the inscriptions might not be 'easily legible', the visitor was, in theory, supposed to use the artist names on the frames to read the related catalogue entry. As we saw in the last chapter, the catalogue entries, like that to Pisanello's *The Virgin and Child with Saints Anthony Abbot and George* (NG776), were intended to provide visitors with an understanding of the artist's biography and a descriptive analysis of the painting they were in the process of viewing. That the photographs taken by Leonida Caldesi (1822–1891) in *The Pictures by the Old Masters in the National Gallery*, often included the paintings in their frames, testifies again to the fact that frames and framing were not simply framed out by the National Gallery, as they were in many other publications of the period (Fig. 42). Indeed, their presence in these photographs, alongside the reference to them in the National Gal-

41. Piero di Cosimo, *A Satyr mourning over a Nymph*, about 1495, National Gallery,
London (photo: Leonida Caldesi in
Wornum and Caldesi 1872, Vol. I)



lery's catalogues, might further suggest that frames had a place in art historical study and a role to play in connoisseurial practice. The question of the extent to which frames and framing were part of art historical apparatus can be probed through reference to the writings of Eastlake on frames and those of his circle. This exercise underlines that frames were an admittedly small but important part of connoisseurial enquiry.

Eastlake kept travel diaries ('Notebooks') in which he recorded his thoughts on the authorship and condition of paintings he had seen. On one occasion, the Director used a frame to assist with making an attribution, writing:

At Rome I also inspected a picture representing single saints in various compartments, by Antonio Vivarini ... Having seen the work I satisfied myself that it is by the master or rather by the two Vivarini, Antonio & Bartolommeo, who generally worked together. The peculiar Gothic frame, the arrangement of the figures and the style of the work corresponding exactly to a similar specimen in the Gallery at Bologna. ⁶

Although it should be stressed that in the broad context of East-lake's notebooks, this type of observation is incredibly rare, it nevertheless demonstrates that original frames could be used to form opinions on authorship and style in the nineteenth century. Moreover, this seemingly isolated comment concerning a frame was, in fact, suggestive not only of Eastlake's wider interest in the subject, but also that of his colleagues, Otto Mündler and art historians of the Berlin School, with whom he had professional and personal contacts, and of Giovanni Morelli.⁷

Interest in historic frames and framing was indicative of a crucial aspect of nineteenth-century art history – research into 'ancient' painting methods and materials. This field of enquiry was approached from a number of different subject spheres and with different motivations but, importantly, generally focused on Renaissance art. For example, in *Chromatography* by George Field, published in 1835 and *Chemistry as applied to the Fine Arts* by George Bachhoffner (1837), chemists investigated Renaissance artists' materials. An archival or

42. Piero della Francesca, Saint Michael, completed 1469, National Gallery, London (Neo-Gothic frame) (photo: Leonida Caldesi in Wornum and Caldesi 1872, Vol. II) literary approach was also adopted and it is here that Eastlake's approach can be situated. In 1849 Mrs Merrifield published Original Treatises. The book was essentially a series of translations of manuscripts relating to the technical aspects of painting. Neither was this an idiosyncratic area of research. The stimulus for Merrifield's enquiry came from a British Royal Commission, notably promoted by Sir Robert Peel, with which she became involved in 1845. The aim of the commission was to revive ancient achievements in contemporary painting by collecting and translating manuscripts in Northern Italy, relating to the technical aspects of historical painting. Merrifield's chief interest was in Renaissance oil painting, an area of research that benefited greatly from Eastlake's Materials for a History of Oil-Painting, his (then) forthcoming publication on the technical processes adopted by the Italian painters. 10 Susanna Avery-Quash argues that Eastlake investigated 'ancient' techniques because it offered a means of distinguishing the work of different artists and schools and was therefore essential to making accurate attributions, as the extract from his notebooks relating to a painting by the Vivarini cited above demonstrates. 12

In Materials for a History of Oil Painting (republished in 1960), Eastlake explored the subjects of frames and framing alongside questions relating to how the Renaissance painter's workshop operated. He focused particularly on matters concerning carving and gilding. He maintained from his reading of Cennino Cennini that, in the fourteenth century, gilding around the figures, stucco decorations and carved framework ('tabernacle or ornamento') of paintings was undertaken first. Faces and hands were added in tempera, after the draperies. 13 From Cennino, Eastlake extrapolated that the gilder would have been of higher status than the painter, citing Donatello who ornamented, gilded and carved frames in his youth for inferior Florentine masters. 14 Eastlake supported this observation by referring to Vasari's life of Spinello Aretino. In this 'Life', Vasari noticed an inscription under a painting, which read: 'Simone Cini, a Florentine, wrought the carved work; Gabriello Saracini executed the gilding; and Spinello di Luca, of Arezzo, painted the picture, in the year 1385', which Eastlake interpreted, rightly or wrongly, as indicative of Spinello's lower status as the painter of the altarpiece. ¹⁵

Eastlake, anticipating Jacob Burckhardt, related framing to the original structure of altarpieces to address, or perhaps simply highlight, the problem of dismemberment. In the second volume of *Materials for a History of Oil Painting*, published posthumously by his widow, Lady Eastlake, Eastlake explained that although Francesco Francia's *The Saint Anne Altarpiece* from the church of San Frediano in Lucca (NG179) was presented as a complete work in the National Gallery, originally it would have been adorned by other paintings in the frame and by the frame itself. Eastlake examined the particular fate of paintings by Perugino in relation to the breaking up of altarpiece ensembles, noting that many of his smaller works in art galleries in Europe had originally been part of larger devotional works. ¹⁶

As stated previously, Eastlake positioned himself at the centre of a nexus of art historians some of whom, like Giovanni Morelli and Jacob Burckhardt, shared his interest in frames and framing. In his manuscripts, Morelli focused on frames which he thought were of the same period as the picture they contained. Of the frame surrounding Marco Palmezzano's Immaculate Conception with Saints Anselm, Augustin and Stephen, which hung in the basilica of San Mercuriale, Forlì, Morelli wrote 'Nella 4 cappella a sinistra entrando v'ha l'altra tavola, con bellissima cornice del tempo' (Fig. 43). ¹⁷ Morelli's observation suggests that there was an apparatus available (perhaps simply experience in his case) through which an original or old frame could be recognised but he omitted to state what that might have been and the significance of his conclusions. What we can glean from this admittedly isolated comment is that Morelli recognised that a painting and its frame could have shared physical characteristics rendering them manifestations of the same stylistic impulse or period. By contrast, in Art of the Renaissance and later in Das Altarbild (1894), Jacob Burckhardt showed how clearly Gothic and Renaissance altarpiece frames developed in relation to the evolution of altarpieces. His findings provided (at least in theoretical terms) a means of considering the form lost frames might have taken and thus of making judgments regarding the date and origin and perhaps suitability of existing frames. Importantly, he also identified the standard Gothic and Renaissance frame forms.

In a letter of 5 January 1862, Jacob Burckhardt commented on



the poor sales of Der Cicerone to his friend Otto Mündler (Travelling Agent for the National Gallery) and outlined his plan for the Art of the Renaissance, an illuminating publication for many reasons, not least in relation to frames and framing. In Section 155 entitled 'Altarpieces and Frames', Burckhardt explored the centrality of frames to altarpieces in terms of their structure, manufacture and meaning. He focused on the transition from 'a system of large and small panels held together by a Gothic sacellum of gilded wood [ancona]' to the fifteenth-century unified altarpiece. 19 Burckhardt argued that, far from being simply structural, frames also expressed some of the 'finest decorative ideas' of the Renaissance. 20 He observed that all'antica wooden frames were usually blue and gold, with arabesques to the pilasters, and supported entablatures with richly decorated friezes.²¹ Particularly 'good' examples of this type of frame could be found in Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi (Fig. 44) and the choir and transept of Santo Spirito in Florence (Fig. 45). 22 For Burckhardt, the 'finest' frame in Venice was that which surrounded Giovanni Bellini's 'Frari' altarpiece in the sacristy of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (Fig. 46).²³ Burckhardt also examined the extent to which Renaissance artists were involved with designing and making frames. Based on his reading of Vasari, he argued that painters such as Filippino Lippi had designed frames for their works.²⁴ Burckhardt concluded the section by introducing the concept of 'frame-settings', which he associated particularly with Venetian portraiture, citing Serlio's frame for Titian's portrait of Francis I as an example.²⁵

Some thirty years later, Burckhardt returned to his research on altarpieces in *Das Altarbild* (1894), focusing specifically on those located in churches in Lombardy and the Brera Gallery, Milan. ²⁶ He also visited the Berlin, Dresden and Munich galleries in Germany, the Louvre in Paris and the National Gallery in London. ²⁷ Although the publication could not have influenced mid-nineteenth century framing practice at the National Gallery directly, the ideas Burckhardt put forward might have been debated earlier since they are clearly a development of his previous thinking on the subject. In this later publication, Burckhardt did not treat altarpieces and frames as a distinctive category; instead, he included scattered discussions

43. Marco Palmezzano, The Immaculate
Conception with the Eternal Father in
Glory and the Saints Augustine, Anselm and
Stephen, 1509, Ferri Chapel, Basilica of
San Mercuriale, Forlì (original frame)

44. Cosimo Rosselli, *Coronation of the Virgin*, 1490, Church of Santa Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi, Florence (original frame)



45. Raffaellino del Garbo, Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints, 1488, Basilica di Santo Spirito, Florence (original frame)





 Giovanni Bellini, Frari Triptych, 1488, Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice (original frame)

on frames throughout the text. Burckhardt showed that framing was key to his concept of periodisation in art. He maintained that the standard type of framing being used in the fourteenth century, as with framed sculptures, was formed of Gothic gables, flanking piers and pinnacles, which demonstrated the influence of Northern Europe.²⁸ For Burckhardt, this format suggested the architecture of a free-standing chapel.²⁹ He proceeded to explain that in the second half of the fourteenth century, attempts were made to dissolve the internal divisions within the polyptych. 30 This facilitated the emergence at the beginning of the fifteenth century, in a 'style already prophetic of the Renaissance', unified field altarpieces set within rich three-gabled frames.³¹ Examples included Lorenzo Monaco's Adoration of the Magi (Fig. 47) and Coronation of the Virgin (Fig. 48), Fra Angelico's Deposition from the Cross (Fig. 49) and Gentile da Fabriano's Adoration of the Magi (Fig. 50). 32 Burckhardt rightly points out that altarpiece design and framing did not fit into discrete period boundaries, as the polyptych flourished throughout



- 47. Lorenzo Monaco, Adoration of the Magi, about 1422, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (original frame, adapted in the late fifteenth century)
- 48. Lorenzo Monaco, Coronation of the Virgin, 1414, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (original frame)





49. Fra Angelico, *Deposition from the Cross* (Pala di Santa Trinita), 1437-40, Museo di San Marco, Florence (original frame)



 Gentile da Fabriano, Adoration of the Magi, 1423, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (original frame; see also Figs 87 and 110) the fifteenth century.³³

I would argue that the underlying aim of Burckhardt's text was to reconstruct the original appearance of altarpieces, such as Duccio's *Maestà*, although this aim was compromised by both its dismemberment and the subsequent loss of original framing elements.³⁴ He wrote: 'we cannot be certain about how, or in what type of framing, the panels were placed above the mensa'.³⁵ The problem of fragmentation and dismemberment might explain why Burckhardt privileged 'original' frames. Writing of Duccio's *Virgin and Child (Rucellai Madonna)*, he commented that it was interesting that it preserved its original frame, with thirty medallions containing half-length figures of saints in it (Fig. 51).³⁶

It would seem that Burckhardt had a more sophisticated understanding of frames and framing than Eastlake did, but what impact did knowledge of how Italian fifteenth- and sixteenth-century altarpieces were originally framed and indeed personal friendships, such as existed between Mündler and Burckhardt, have on nineteenth-century framing? To address this question, I turn my attention to the re-framing that took place in Florence because that city was a very major source of works acquired for the National Gallery from the 1850s onwards and one historically associated with pioneering altarpiece design in the fifteenth century.

First, it should be stated that there was a clear desire to preserve historical frames that were original to their paintings. The major relationship the National Gallery cultivated in Florence during the 1850s and 1860s, in terms of restoration and acquisitions, was with the dealers Ugo Baldi and Francesco Lombardi – referred to collectively as Lombardi-Baldi, from whom the Gallery acquired twenty-two early Italian and Renaissance paintings in 1857. However, Eastlake's association with Lombardi-Baldi began several years earlier, when they organised, at his request, the restoration of the panels and frames of some of his earliest acquisitions as Director, but only totally re-framing the works when it was deemed absolutely necessary. The minutes of the meeting of the Trustees of the National Gallery held on the 12 November 1855 make clear Eastlake's enthusiasm for Florentine frame–making, and the connection between the restoration of the picture and the frame.



 Duccio di Buoninsegna, Virgin and Child (Rucellai Madonna), 1285, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (its original frame)

The minute reads:

The pictures purchased in Florence have been left there in order to have a frame made for one and the others repaired and regilt, the art of frame-making being practiced with great ability in Florence. Some of the pictures also required partial restoration.³⁸

These paintings, all dating to the later fifteenth century, comprised one attributed to the workshop of Botticelli, *The Virgin and*

Francesco Botticini, Saint Gerolamo
 Altarpiece, about 1490, National Gallery,
 London (original but heavily restored frame)



Child with Saint John and an Angel (NG275), Benozzo Gozzoli's The Virgin and Child Enthroned among Angels and Saints (NG283) and Francesco Botticini's Saint Jerome in Penitence with Saints and Donors (then called Cosimo Rosselli, NG227). The frame best documented in terms of the restoration undertaken during the 1850s was the Botticini (Rosselli) (Fig. 52). The Board Minutes describe: 'An altarpiece in three compartments, in its original frame, with painted frieze, and with four predella pictures, the arms of the Rucellai being repeated at each end of the predella. The altar frame required entire regilding'. ³⁹

Closer examination of the frame and archival evidence relating to it shows that far more than re-gilding took place. Three receipts relating to the treatment of the Botticini outline the types of interventions Florentine craftsmen made to original frames. These interventions must be indicative of the poor state of preservation the frame was found in. The receipt from Giovanni Bisoni, evidently a carver and gilder, informs us that the frieze and pilasters were



 Filippino Lippi, The Virgin and Child with Saints Jerome and Dominic, about 1485, National Gallery, London (Neo-Renaissance frame)

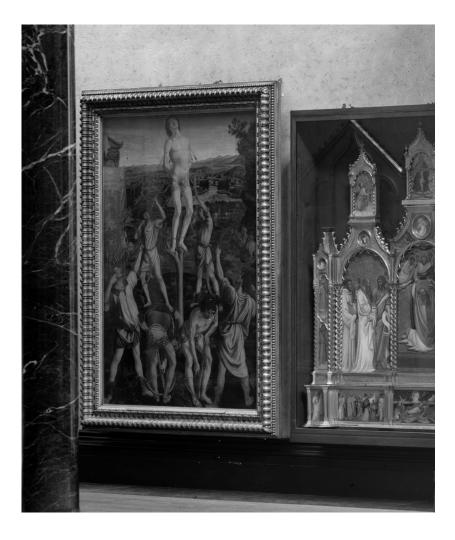
re-carved and the frame re-gilded. Another carver (the name is difficult to decipher) undertook the restoration of the capitals and carved the leaves and angels' heads on the frieze and sharpened the ornament on the second pilaster. ⁴⁰ Even without this evidence, the style of the carving on the frieze of the Botticini frame, although emulative of Renaissance ornament, is distinctively nineteenth-century in appearance. This juxtaposition between Renaissance and Neo-Renaissance ornament is revealing because the skills to create a deceptive copy were available but went unused. The restoration of the frame might be seen as a means of encouraging specific readings of the painting. The nineteenth-century hyper-legible ornament on the frieze echoes the presence of the angels in the top quarter of the painting, thereby reinforcing an element of the main field set in a heavenly space and encouraging the onlooker to examine

54. Benozzo Gozzoli, The Virgin and Child Enthroned among Angels and Saints, 1461-2, National Gallery, London (Neo-Renaissance cassetta frame with guilloche ornament)



the painting closely, as Eastlake and Wornum hoped visitors to the National Gallery would. The main aim of the intervention was, nonetheless, to preserve an antique frame, an action that was indicative of its perceived historic and actual value.⁴¹

The Lombardi-Baldi partnership either made or had made new frames for the majority of the paintings they sold to the National Gallery. The re-framing which alludes most to the work's original function is that surrounding Filippino Lippi's *The Virgin and Child with Saints Jerome and Dominic* (NG293), commissioned from Lombardi-Baldi in 1857 (Fig. 53). It is revealing that Wornum recorded in his diary that it was a 'good specimen of a modern Italian Frame' but made no reference to the fact that the frame broadly replicates an *all'antica* frame, incorporating Filippino's predella panel of Christ in the tomb and portrait saints and could be read as an attempt to communicate its previous function as an altarpiece. The Lombardi-Baldi firm placed Gozzoli's *The Virgin and Child Enthroned among Angels and Saints* (NG283) (Fig. 54), which had lost its predella, in a cassetta frame that has the same mouldings on each side, with guilloche ornament and rosette centres and corners.



55. Antonio and Piero del Pollaiolo, The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, National Gallery, Room IV, 1923 (present-day Gallery 38, looking north; see also Fig. 126) (nineteenth-century 'knull' frame, replica of a seventeenth-century Florentine frame)

Guilloche was a popular style of ornament in the latter half of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, a prime example of its use being the Raphael tapestry borders in the Vatican Museums, Rome. The frame seems to have been made without reference to the character or original context of the painting and does not interact with the composition nor allude to its original purpose as an altarpiece. A 'knull' frame (indicated by a deep incised hollow) was given to Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo's *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* (NG292), which was removed in the 1960s (Fig. 55). This pattern might have been taken from a frame in Santa Croce that surrounds the *Flagellation* by Alessandro del Barbiere (1543–1592) of 1575, but the relation is vague. And Once again, Wornum focused on the quality of the frame in his diary rather than its historic associations, writing a 'magnificent design and perhaps the finest frame in the gallery'. To varying degrees, the latter two examples offer a general sense of

the Florentine Renaissance framing tradition, thereby encouraging their contents to be perceived only in the most general context in which they were made.

References to Florentine architecture become more evident in a sub-set of frames within the Lombardi-Baldi collection, made during the 1850s. However, Wornum, on account of his interests and background at the South Kensington Museum, might have viewed them as sources of ornament and good design rather than as a means of rendering historical context. The frame for the early Coronation of the Virgin, 1380-1385, attributed to Agnolo Gaddi (NG568), employs architectural elements of the Church of Orsanmichele and the Duomo Campanile in Florence (Fig. 56). The feathers on the pinnacle of the frame and the basic form of the pilasters (with the exception of the capitals), particularly the incised diamond shapes, are heavily reliant on the pinnacled niche frame sculpted for Donatello's Saint George (Fig. 57), located on one of the piers of Orsanmichele. The arrangement of twisted rope and rosette are found on the top window of the campanile and the diamond shapes are referenced in the second layer of the campanile. These motifs are extended into the frame for Jacopo di Cione and workshop's Coronation of the Virgin (NG569.1), a frame that exhibits the same distinctive arrangement of diamond shapes with rosettes and feathered pinnacles. This group of frames emphasises Florentine Renaissance architecture, reflecting a Vasarian bias for that city. By contrast, in Chapter 4, I show that during the 1880s models for new frames to surround Renaissance panels came from Venice, albeit linked to the Tuscan tradition.

It is revealing to examine the connection between re-framing and rendering historical context through the person of Mündler, a close friend of Burckhardt's and an art historian in his own right. Mündler's diary entries and letters suggest that during the period in which he was acting as Travelling Agent for the National Gallery (1855–58) and clearly following Eastlake's instructions, he would locate old frames and suggest models for new frames in Italy. His diary entries also demonstrate a desire to locate old frames, the difficulties in having them adapted – suggesting that perhaps this was an unfamiliar process for Mündler and his con-

temporaries – and issues concerning cost. In relation to the final point, it is interesting to note that on one occasion Mündler recorded that the antiquarian Antonio Zen had offered to go to Vicenza, where he knew of a woman with a frame that might fit the 'Pisani' (*Family of Darius*) Veronese (NG294). ⁴⁶ However, Zen did not purchase the frame on Mündler's behalf (although he felt it was 'excellent') because the cost was too great. ⁴⁷ This anecdote reminds us, firstly, that National Gallery funds were a limiting factor on framing decisions during the 1850s and 1860s and, secondly, that old frames could have had a high value, at least in Italy.

Mündler's notes on the process of re-framing paintings from the Galvagna collection in Venice are useful because they enable us to consider the impact historical understanding of Renaissance frames had on re-framing practice. Mündler claimed in his diary that the existing frames to the Galvagna paintings had been removed because they were 'bad'. 48 'Bad' here seems to be a judgment of taste. In the next sentence, Mündler states that he may attempt to sell the frames back to the family, which suggests that the term does not relate to their condition but rather to their suitability for the paintings or to the specific environment of the National Gallery. In 1856, Mündler noted that he had found six frames at Zen's, which could be adapted for the Galvagna pictures. 49 On 2 April 1856, Zen himself wrote a three-page letter to Eastlake, of which the first page is largely concerned with Mündler's instructions regarding the re-framing. Zen states that the frames had been made smaller, re-gilded and covered in a patina layer to ensure that the finish was not too brilliant (which, as we will see, was a crucial means of ensuring old frames could become a part of the National Gallery environment). Zen explains that his overall aim was to ensure that the frames had a 'good appearance', presumably meaning that they conformed to Mündler's expectations for display. Zen also makes it clear that he was not used to undertaking such 'fastidious' work on old objects, suggesting these activities were a departure from his usual practice. 50

Arguably in bringing together paintings and old frames of the

(Overleaf, left)

 Agnolo Gaddi, The Coronation of the Virgin, about 1380-85, National Gallery, London (nineteenth-century frame)

(Overleaf, right)

57. Donatello, *Saint George*, 1416, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence





 Francesco Tacconi, The Virgin and Child, 1489, National Gallery, London (Sansovino frame)



same period, Mündler might have been attempting to create a complete Renaissance object of the type that Burckhardt had described. Certainly, in May 1857, when Mündler visited Palazzo Asti, he noticed that a scene depicting the *Holy Family with the Saints Joseph, John and Jerome* by Lodovico Mazzolino, was 'completed' by its frame, which he described as 'in itself a work of art'. SI Currently, a Sansovino frame (a type defined in Appendix I) surrounds *The Virgin and Child* by Francesco Tacconi

(NG286) (Fig. 58), which was part of the Galvagna collection and this is, according to Davey, likely to be the frame applied to it by Zen and Mündler. 52 Certainly, there is no archival record of its having been replaced. At first sight, the Sansovino frame appears positively over-exuberant, almost theatrical, in comparison to the modest devotional work it surrounds and diminishes the sacred nature of the painting. Moreover, it is at least fifty years younger than the panel. Initially, Mündler's choice seems to have been motivated by a desire to purchase a good, or at least impressive, frame, regardless of its appropriateness for the painting, to make the painting seem more significant. However, there might have been an art historical element to Mündler's choice. Describing a work by Bellini (who influenced Tacconi) in Pavia, he noted a 'Fine old frame in the form of an altar (sansovinoesque)'. 53 He might have felt a frame he associated with an altarpiece was highly suitable for a devotional painting. This incident suggests the intention of locating historically appropriate frames but is clearly insufficient as evidence on which to base any general conclusions.

How might we think about the frames purchased in Italy and the Neo-Renaissance versions hanging together in the same space? Both types of frame offer a sense of context for the visitor, but the specificity of this context varied. The most obvious allusion to a chapel context was the all'antica style frame surrounding Filippino Lippi's, The Virgin and Child with Saints Jerome and Dominic (NG293) (Fig. 53), and such specificity might have been necessitated by the presence not only of the main panel but also of an associated predella. But I would argue that most of the frames described above made only deliberately vague references to previous contexts. As we have seen, for Whitehead, the focus on style and biography in the National Gallery's critical apparatus was an attempt to divert attention away from the social function of these paintings. 54 This issue became more important in relation to paintings acquired and framed in Florence, because of the very public debates pursued in the press concerning their provenance and authenticity.

HISTORICAL VAGUENESS AND ANXIOUS ART HISTORY

Donata Levi has shown how problematic was the transferral of devotional art, particularly from the medieval and early Renaissance period, from a sacred context and Italian patrimony to the muse-ological environment in London during this period. Firstly, export laws in Italy rendered acquisitions made there by the National Gallery problematic in legal terms. For example, there was clearly anxiety regarding the acquisition and provenance of the aforementioned Lombardi-Baldi collection in 1857. On the 6 April, Eastlake wrote to Wornum informing him that: 'Sig. Lombardi is anxious that the provenance of some of the pictures ... should be indicated generally only, so that in the first edition of the catalogue it will be better not to mention the convent of San Giovanni Evangelista whence it appears several came'. ⁵⁶

The purchase of Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo's Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian (completed 1475) (NG292) was also a particularly contentious one. In his article attacking Eastlake, the artist and dealer John Morris Moore (writing under the pseudonym of Verax)⁵⁷ quoted a law, passed in 1754 by the Tuscan Government, which prohibited exportation of works of art without their agreement. 58 Exporting paintings which had previously fulfilled devotional functions in churches was particularly contentious. Morris Moore cited the Minister of Finance's proclamation of September 1818 that 'objects of art' in 'sacred edifices' were public property. 59 Morris Moore argued that the chapel of San Sebastiano de Pucci in Santissima Annunziata, from which The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian originated, was part of the main body of the Basilica, and that because it therefore belonged to the Italian public and not to the Pucci heirs who had sold it, its export had been illegal. Morris Moore heightened the sense of conspiracy surrounding the acquisition by maintaining that the painting had been packed at midnight and that the packers had been bribed. 60 The Tuscan Government could take export laws extremely seriously. In 1855 they prevented the National Gallery from purchasing a painting depicting the Madonna and Child enthroned by Domenico Ghirlandaio (now in the Uffizi, Florence). 61 This was despite

the fact that the Tuscan Minister of Foreign Affairs described the work as being 'in a small room off a deserted dormitory, its ancient frame has been mislaid or stolen. The *gradino* formerly attached to the bottom of it is missing. The face of the Holy Virgin is completely discoloured'. 62

The counter argument ran that if the Italian government could not prevent their nation's works of art from deteriorating, they certainly could be protected and seen in English art galleries. Indeed, the National Gallery was described as a 'Noah's Ark', implying that it was saving works from imminent destruction. ⁶³

Eastlake was also criticised for having new acquisitions purchased in Italy also restored there, particularly after the cleaning controversies of the 1840s. ⁶⁴ In the tract of 1857 mentioned above, Morris Moore (Verax) argued that the restoration of *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*, alongside other major acquisitions from Italy before they had been exported, was elaborately deceptive: 'Such is the condition [scrubbed and compromised] of this Pollaiuolo, and thus the Public ought to see it – not tricked up by the "restorer". ⁶⁵

Morris Moore then linked restoration to errors in attribution, using Botticelli's *The Virgin and Child with Saint John and the two Angels* purchased from J.H. Brown in Florence (and now regarded as being by the Botticelli workshop) as an example of an 'ungenuine' painting and consequently 'hidden from the public eye'. ⁶⁶ The Lombardi-Baldi frames struck a calculated balance, being reminiscent of original frames and thus underlining the authenticity of their contents, but not so specific that they could provoke problematic questions. In the following paragraphs, I argue that ensuring these panels could be inspected, through interventions to the frame surfaces in conjunction with the physical characteristics (light, etc.) of the gallery space, was a fundamental means of repositioning such criticism and pursuing a museological form of art history that was intended to make the qualities of artistic style publicly comprehensible and visible.



CREATING A CONNOISSEURIAL ENVIRONMENT AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY

Although seemingly subjective, connoisseurship was positioned as a scientific practice, which Whitehead interprets as 'pseudo-empirical', designed to assist with making and defending attributions. 67 Whitehead maintains that increased focus on connoisseurship or 'observational attribution' at the National Gallery was prompted by public criticism surrounding the authenticity of Eastlake's purchases, which, as we have seen, was in itself inextricably linked to restoration.⁶⁸ I suggest that interventions made to frames were part of the creation of a connoisseurial environment, designed to showcase the physical characteristics of the paintings that underpinned art historical attributions. This process was not only for connoisseurs. It meant that visitors, including artists, could inspect the works on display as they were intended to be seen. Indeed, the perceived needs of artists should not be neglected from this discussion. During the 1840s the government attempted to promote a British School of painting. ⁶⁹ To this end a Fine Arts Commission was established, with Prince Albert as Chairman and Eastlake as Secretary, to investigate means of assisting painters. 70 Eastlake, like Joshua Reynolds, thought that the old masters were good examples for young painters to imitate. ⁷¹ Logically, the paintings available to copy had to be visible.

The way recently acquired paintings should be displayed at the National Gallery was a key issue in the period 1850 to 1880. John Ruskin complained that viewers struggled to see paintings that were hung 'above the line', became confused by the lack of order and ultimately emerged exhausted, rather than transformed, by their experience. William Blundell Spence, for his part, likened the National Gallery interiors to those of an auction room, comparing Trafalgar Square's gallery unfavourably to those in the Louvre, the Doge's Palace or the Pitti Palace. Eastlake articulated these problems and offered solutions in a public letter of 1845 on the inadequacies of the National Gallery, which he addressed to the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, and published in the *Athenaeum Journal*. He began thus: 'Every specimen of art in a national col-

lection should be assumed to be up to the challenge of inspection, and to be worthy of being "well displayed". 74

Charlotte Klonk has shown in 'Mounting Vision: Charles Eastlake and the National Gallery of London' and more recently in *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000*, that 'display' was not limited to hanging paintings on a wall. It encompassed constructing and enhancing the visitors' viewing experience, by making alterations to the design and appearance of the gallery space, namely, as we shall see, through lighting and wall colour. The end goal was to ensure that the paintings could be observed for connoisseurial inspection and aesthetic looking. Observation', as Whitehead has argued, for Ruskin and Waagen, was aimed at ensuring paintings could be seen individually, becoming the centre of the viewers' attention and contemplation.

In Klonk's analysis of museum and art gallery interiors in general and those of the National Gallery in particular, the functions assigned to frames have been omitted. This lacuna is a curious one. Frames and framing were acknowledged by Eastlake, Wornum and, in a very different way, the scientist Michael Faraday, as an essential part of the viewing apparatus, through which the visitors' experience and mode of viewing in the National Gallery could be managed. Central to my discussion is how Eastlake and his contemporaries constructed the museum visitors' eye (regardless of class) as being particularly susceptible to confusion and exhaustion in museum environments. Perception had to be managed, if the National Gallery was to meet its responsibility for displaying paintings, so that they could be inspected. Evidence for this claim can be gleaned from Helen Rees Leahy's analysis of contemporary responses to visitor behaviour at the 'Art Treasures' exhibition in Manchester in 1857. For example, after seeing the Manchester Exhibition, the Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone, wrote in his diary, 'a wonderful sight of materiality, & not less remarkable morally, but bewildering to the mind & exhausting to the eye for the vastness when viewed wholesale', a statement that indicates that class was no barrier to visual exhaustion.⁷⁷ A guide aimed at factory workers and their families entitled What to see and where to see it! Or the Operative's Guide to the Art Treasures Exhibition (costing 1d) attempted to assist those

who felt 'somewhat bewildered and dazzled' by the exhibition.⁷⁸ Although these comments were made specifically in relation to the 1857 Manchester Exhibition, there is evidence to suggest that the potentially harmful effects of being dazzled and exhausted was a concern for both Eastlake and Wornum, especially when display space was limited and paintings were shown crowded together. It is interesting that most of the material to support this claim emerges from discussions relating to the quality of brightness of frame surfaces and gilding more generally. This concern was indicative of a wider problem. For example, Jacob von Falke, author of *Art in the House* (1879), claimed that gold could have a dazzling and restless effect on the viewers' eyes.⁷⁹

Wornum's diary demonstrates that his responsibilities in relation to 'framing' included locating old frames, commissioning new ones, and ensuring that the ones on display were dusted and re-gilded at regular intervals. It is revealing that the first part of the diary takes the form of an alphabetised index. Hitherto, it has gone unnoticed that Wornum only annotated the 'F' section. His comment reads 'Frames, regilding of, Nov 57'. 80 The date is significant, enabling us to construct what was at stake in the term 'bad condition'. In 1857, Wornum had reported that a number of the frames were in 'bad condition' and, as a direct consequence, the Board of Trustees allowed frames to be re-gilded at his discretion.⁸¹ We learn from Wornum's diary that the Minute was passed shortly after Prince Albert had visited the National Gallery and commented to Wornum that some of the frames on display were in, 'bad condition', suggesting that the 'Vandermeir' (sic Vander Meire Gerard, presumably NG264) should be placed in a (shadow) box. 82 While there is clear evidence to suggest that Prince Albert was interested in frame design and finish, it is also true that the re-gilding of frames was a regular and normal occurrence in Victorian England. For example, framers' advertising cards from the period frequently advertised re-gilding, amongst their other services. 83 By contrast, the Italian frame-making business was far more specialised, with labour being distributed according to specific skills, i.e. carving or gilding.⁸⁴

Wornum made numerous references to re-gilding in his diary, indicating that the 1857 Minute had an immediate and dramatic

impact. On 11 April 1856, the Keeper recorded that "The Virgin & Child enthroned" by Mantegna, hung in the West Room – Previously lined by Mr Leedham, varnished by Mr Bentley. Frame ornamented and regilt'. 85 This comment suggests that plaster ornament had fallen off, which would have left an unseemly, exposed area of white gesso, necessitating re-gilding. But re-gilding was not only employed to conceal damage nor used in a blanket fashion. On 14 December 1857, Wornum noted that the frames of works then attributed to Leonardo da Vinci (NG18, now catalogued as by Bernardino Luin Mazzolini), Ludovico Mazzolino (NG169), Annibale Carracci (NG9) and Raphael (NG168) - notably all examples by Italian painters – had been 'partly regilt'. 86 Furthermore, the final appearance of the gilding, particularly in relation to shine, was also considered to be of the utmost importance. On 31 July 1857, the Keeper recorded that the frame for Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo's The Martyrdom of Saint. Sebastian (NG292) had arrived from Florence 'overburnished'. 87 Critchfield was subsequently instructed by the National Gallery to re-gild the frame and thereby reduce the level of lustre.

Technical analysis reveals that re-gilding was undertaken using oil gilding. In contrast to water gilding, oil gilding can be used over any surface but, in general, it is laid directly onto a gesso ground rather than onto a layer of coloured bole sitting on top of the gesso, as was common with Renaissance frames. In most publications on framing, oil gilding is dismissed as a cheap substitute for water gilding and later critics condemned this practice at the National Gallery as it was used in the period 1850–1880. In the appendix to the enquiry (1914), the aforementioned National Gallery Trustee, Robert Benson, maintained that the most erroneous re-gilding had occurred in the period under discussion here, when new gold was routinely applied to a white ground as opposed to a red bole, as it had been the norm during the fifteenth century. 89

Benson's attitude was typical of early-twentieth century hostility toward Victorian taste but we should not allow his stance to influence our judgment. There is evidence to suggest that in England, specifically, oil gilding was chosen for its aesthetic properties, rather than simply out of ignorance or economy. Indeed, oil gilding was



practiced by the best craftsmen of the day. Pobert Dossie, author of *Handmaid to the Arts* (1758), in which he lamented that the English government did little to foster the decorative arts, maintained that with oil gilding, the gold was 'less shining and glossy, which is esteemed a perfection in this kind of gilding; though taking away the prejudice of fashion, I shall think the most shining the most beautiful and strongest effect [i.e. water gilding]'. 91

The Painter's Gilder's and Varnisher's Manual (1903) included amongst the advantages of gilding that it was 'easily and quickly done' and 'very durable'. Its disadvantage and main characteristic was that '[i] t cannot, however, be burnished, and [was], therefore, deficient in lustre'. Part The comment on the Pollaiuolo frame, referred to above, suggests that the qualities of mattness associated with oil gilding were actively harnessed at the Gallery, in order perhaps to manage the visitors' perception of the paintings they were examining. This observation is supported by a footnote in Eastlake's open letter to Peel, in which he stated that 'Mr. Samuel Rogers ... informs me that the frames of the pictures in his possession were, many years since, varnished. The advantage of this expedient he has found to be two fold; the brightness of the gilding is agreeably mellowed and subdued and the frames, when they require cleaning, may be washed without injury'. Page 1993

Technical analysis of the frame surface can heighten our understanding of the type of re-gilding that took place and its effect, enabling us to deduce the motivations for it. Christine Powell has argued that the frame to Carlo Crivelli's *Madonna della Rondine* (NG724.1) was probably re-gilded in the nineteenth century (Fig. 59).⁹⁴ She maintains that it was then that the original surface was regessoed, the areas of blue azurite over indigo were covered in synthetic ultramarine (which was darker than what preceded it), and the original water-gilded areas were re-gilded over with mordant gilding (i.e. oil gilding) and then toned, presumably to further reduce the brilliancy of the frame surface.⁹⁵ This gilding, which was comparatively flatter and less iridescent, was removed in 1989.⁹⁶ The Crivelli is not the only example of English frame makers applying additional gesso layers to National Gallery frames and then re-gilding them using oil gilding. Technical analysis (inorganic) shows that the original *tondo*

59. Frame of Carlo Crivelli's Madonna of the Swallow, after 1490, National Gallery, London (see also Fig. 20). Left-hand side the frame after restoration, right-hand side in Victorian state

60. Workshop of Sandro Botticelli, The Virgin and Child with Saint John and an Angel, about 1490. Tempera on wood. 84.5 × 84.5 cm. National Gallery, London (original frame)



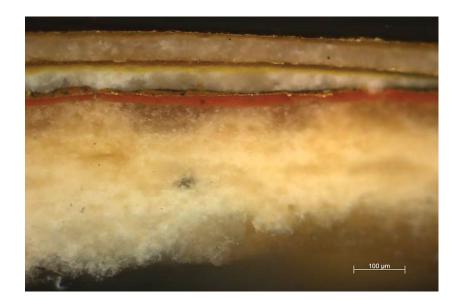
frame, i.e. the first frame surrounding The Virgin and Child with Saint John Baptist and an Angel (NG275), purchased as a Botticelli, which we know from an inscription of the reverse of the panel was made by Giuliano da Sangallo, 97 was similarly treated (Figs. 60 and 60a). 98 The nineteenth-century additions comprise seven layers, comprising from the bottom up, calcium carbonate (chalk ground), bright yellow bole, ochre coloured oil mordant, gold leaf, chalk ground, ochre coloured oil mordant and gold leaf. These coatings themselves conceal a layer of gesso grosso, another of gesso sottile, red clay bole, ochre colour paint and gold leaf (Fig. 61). 99 Even without technical analysis, visual evidence shows that many other frames in the Gallery were re-gilded with oil gilding, facilitating a hypothesis that the general taste was for less iridescent and more matt frames, the different effects of which can be seen clearly in this image (Fig. 62). Further understanding of what motivated re-gilding by the use of oil gilding in this period can be reached by analysing the interventions made to the picture surfaces at the time, particularly with regard to qualities of colouristic brilliance and clarity.



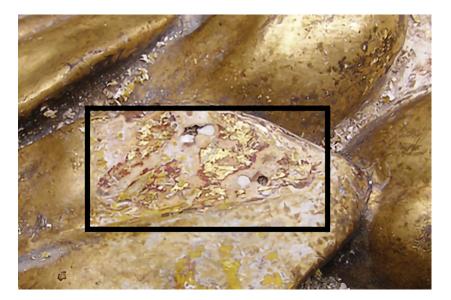
60a. Frame during restoration; the lower right half retains its Victorian oil gilded surface.

'CLEANING' FOR AESTHETIC REASONS

In 1847, Eastlake resigned his position as Keeper, partly because of the controversy surrounding the picture cleaning campaigns he had overseen at the National Gallery. Interventions had been made to the picture surfaces of the National Gallery's Peace and War by Rubens (NG46), Bacchus and Ariadne by Titian (NG35), Hilly River Landscape with a Horseman talking to a Shepherdess by Cuyp (NG53) and Velázquez's Philip IV Hunting Wild Boar (NG197). The main criticism levelled at the National Gallery in the press was that the picture surfaces had not been cleaned but 'flayed' and in so doing been 'deprived' of their 'mellow colour harmonies', an aesthetic quality held in high regard at the time. ^{IOI} A typical response in support of this argument is that of Ruskin. In reaction to the cleaning of Ruben's Peace and War, he wrote that 'it is utterly and forever partially destroyed ... It was in the most advantageous condition under which a work of Rubens can be seen, mellowed by time into more perfect harmony than when it left the easel, enriched and warmed without losing any of its freshness or energy'. 102



- 61. Sample 1, cross-section showing seven layers, visible light, 20x. From the frame of The Virgin and Child with Saint John and an Angel (see Fig. 60-60a)
- 62. Evidence of water gilding on the frame of *The Virgin and Child with Saint John and an Angel* (see Fig. 60-60a) (during restoration)



Clearly, Eastlake's aim had not been to scour paintings – and neither were they scoured. Instead, these interventions may be seen as both a wider aesthetic preference for brighter paintings and a desire to show these works in a condition that was as close as possible to their original appearance, that is, in Ruskin's terms, the state in which a painting 'left the easel'. Underlying the second aim was a desire to confirm attributions of certain paintings. More can be learnt about the cleaning controversies through the investigations that took place afterwards.

As a response to the cleaning controversies, a Select Committee was appointed in 1850 to 'consider present Accommodation afforded by the National Gallery, and the best mode of Preserving and

Exhibiting to the Public the Works of Art given to the Nation or Purchased by Parliamentary Grants'. During their proceedings, William Seguier, Keeper of the National Gallery from 1824 to 1843, expressed his preference for a varnish consisting of 'mastic in turpentine and boiled linseed oil' to varnish paintings, in comparison to French varnish, which was 'too glossy than is generally approved of in this country'. 103 Consisting of gum/resin from a mastic tree and turpentine, mastic varnish protected the picture from dirt and preserved its colours. However, it was also perceived to be 'brightening', enhancing the 'lustre' of the colours. Although it did 'mellow', unlike other varnishes it darkened less over time, although it did yellow. 104 The comments above suggest that conservation at the National Gallery in this period was motivated by both aesthetic and practical concerns. Indeed, it would appear that Eastlake had a general aesthetic preference for a bright palette as was also manifest in his own paintings. Avery-Quash attributes the visible change in the palette of Eastlake's own paintings and his interest in the Venetian School (specifically Titian) largely to the influence of the painter Sir Thomas Lawrence. ¹⁰⁵ Eastlake wrote to Lawrence to express his sense of the chromatic brilliance of sixteenth-century Venetian painting he so admired: 'I have lately read a life of Titian by one Ticozzi, it abounds in descriptions ... [it] describe[s] his colouring in terms that apply to the purest and most brilliant style'. 106

In turn, Eastlake advised the painter, future Surveyor of the Royal Collection and his successor as Keeper of the National Gallery, Thomas Uwins, to brighten his palette. ¹⁰⁷

The issue of an aesthetic preference for bright and clean colours extended beyond Eastlake and the National Gallery. Eileen Cleere maintains that Ruskin, linking art and sanitary reform, came to prefer the bright clear colours of Turner and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in contrast to the 'dark obscurity' of the Renaissance Old Masters, light being associated with the spiritual improvement of England and physical health. ¹⁰⁸ In one instance, the critic compared learning to paint from dark old masters to 'breathing in an unhealthy effluvia of decomposition'. ¹⁰⁹

Problematically for Eastlake, terms such as 'brightening' clashed with general nineteenth-century expectations relating to the ap-

pearance of the picture surface. Sir George Beaumont, whose gift of paintings was one of the first to find its way to the National Gallery collection, stated that '[a] good picture, like a good fiddle, should be brown,' and his opinion was evidently indicative of that of many contemporaries. ¹¹⁰ David Robertson states that in this period of 'brown mania', a cleaned and varnished painting would have appeared 'excessively bright' and deemed controversial (Fig. 63). ¹¹¹ An *Art Journal* article of 1853, attempted to dismiss this mode of criticism, implying that such actions returned the painting back to its original state of colour;

Two questions arise on this and similar occasions. Does the continuance of dirt, decaying varnish, and other deposits on the surface of pictures, contribute to their preservation? Certainly not. Secondly – Does the view of pictures in their original condition of colour, as completed by the great masters, contribute to the improvement of Art, and benefit students, are they more improved and benefitted by viewing them when covered with a saturation of hues resembling liquorice or treacle? We suppose this requires no answer. ¹¹²

In later years, *Punch* would praise Eastlake's successor, Sir William Boxall, for daring 'to bring up the jewels of Rubens and Poussin, and Salvator Rosa, as bright as when they had left the hand that had set them'. ¹¹³

PRACTICAL MOTIVATIONS FOR CLEANING

There were also pragmatic reasons for the cleaning and re-varnishing of the National Gallery's paintings as *The Report on the Subject of the Pictures in the National Gallery Protected by Glass* (1850) co-authored by Eastlake, Michael Faraday and William Russell (Trustee of the National Gallery) clearly demonstrates. ¹¹⁴ Central to the report was a discussion regarding the specific pollutants that the National Gallery faced and how they combined to alter the surface of the frame and the paintings within them. Although



 William Hogarth, Time Smoking a Picture,
 1761, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

the authors of the report admitted that the open spaces behind and in front of the National Gallery mitigated, to some extent, these effects, the issue of pollution remained a challenge.¹¹⁵

Eastlake, Faraday and Russell lamented the 'great volumes of smoke' emitted from the 'several large chimneys' belonging to the nearby baths and wash houses, and the steam engine which powered the Trafalgar Square fountains, compounded by the fumes emanating from the steam boats on the Thames. This smoke was introduced into the Gallery via ventilation systems, which were, in turn, necessitated by the 'vapours' that visitors were perceived to emit together with the dust they brought in with them. Moreover, prior to the introduction of electric light in 1938, candles and fires in the galleries added to this soot, while also emitting water. This problem was not limited to the Na-

tional Gallery. On visiting Buckingham Palace, the German Field Marshall, Helmuth von Moltke, commented: 'Even in Buckingham Palace there was yesterday a thick fog consisting chiefly of coal smoke. Pictures, gold frames and embroidered work, must suffer very severely from it'. ¹¹⁸ Faraday lampooned architects who 'desirous to have all they possibly can have for the purpose of purifying the atmosphere ... call in a chemist to make the air sweet. When you have sweetened it, they say, there is a shadow about this light'. ¹¹⁹

In addition to this 'fog', the 1850 report describes the problems associated with 'a large mass of people' within the National Gallery interiors. 120 The authors claimed, as earlier committee reports had done as far back as 1835, that many of these visitors used the interiors not as an opportunity to examine the nation's paintings but as a place to shelter in, 'exercise' their children or simply eat and drink. 121 The respiration and perspiration of the sheer number of people, referred to as 'animal and annomical vapour' by Eastlake, Faraday and Russell, was thought to condense on the picture surface, combining easily with the varnish which already had a tendency to become 'opaque' and 'dull' and thus exacerbated the already unstable situation. 122 The authors claimed that these combinations rendered the picture surfaces dull, covering them in a thick film, which was deemed 'foreign' in both its texture and colour to 'the original character of the picture'. 123 Eastlake, Faraday and Russell argued that the film-effect detracted from the 'highest qualities' of the paintings and deprived them of 'clearness and brilliancy'. 124

The problems associated with the appearance of the paintings' surfaces were exacerbated by the presence of dust. Oils on canvas were deemed to have particularly porous surfaces which absorbed dust. Eastlake argued that moisture in the air and dust, particularly in the summer months, meant that paintings and frames had to be cleaned daily. This damaged their appearance and led to the necessity of additional re-varnishing and re-gilding. Ultimately, these types of treatments could not reverse the discolouration caused by the combination of vapour, dust and soot with varnish layers. This explanation helps one identify

the vicious circle that Eastlake and Wornum faced in relation to picture cleaning. If painting surfaces were not cleaned and varnished, visitors and connoisseurs would not be able to see the paintings on display properly, and the Gallery would fail to fulfil one of its main public duties. On the other hand, when paintings were cleaned, the Gallery was accused of 'flaying' the national collection. I maintain, by borrowing heavily from Klonk's research, that oil gilded frames, like glazing, played a vital role in managing the visitors' perception of the picture surfaces in a consciously non-interventionist manner.

Preserving tonal relationships: A non-interventionist approach

In their report, Eastlake, Faraday and Russell suggested that the problems associated with pollution could be combated by glazing the paintings on display. Although we are used to the idea today, in 1850 the scheme was widely viewed as controversial. In the *Further Report*, it was stated that 'from two quarters ... Paris and the Hague we have received a strong expression of unfavourable opinion [of glazing] ... from Dresden ... we have a very decided approval'. ¹²⁷

It was acknowledged that glazing would create reflections, which would, in turn, impede viewing. ¹²⁸ However, glazing was justified by the 'striking' difference between picture surfaces that had been protected by glass and those that had remained uncovered. ¹²⁹ It was noted that the paintings enclosed in boxes remained the most 'pure' in appearance, including the burnished elements on the picture frames. ¹³⁰

The discussions appear to be indicative of a desire to preserve the colour and tonal relationships between frames and the paintings they contained. Comments made in Board Minutes by the Director suggest this was motivated by the concept of harmony between the painting and the frame. For example, Eastlake observed in relation to Paolo Veronese's *The Adoration of the Kings* (NG 268) that 'the picture in its new frame ... from the fresh-

ness of the gilding does not as yet harmonise with the low tone of the painting'. [13]

The idea of establishing and then preserving the tonal relationships between paintings and frames by re-varnishing and re-gilding is further supported by the Gallery's investigations into gas light, which, ultimately, was not adopted as it was at the South Kensington Museum. Eastlake wrote to Michael Faraday: 'I am requested by the Trustees ... to ask you whether, in the course of your enquiries respecting gas used for lighting, those enquiries have been extended to the effects of such gas, on pictures and on gilt frames'. ¹³²

In the quotation above, it is revealing that the Trustees were interested in the effect of gaslight on both the picture surfaces and gilded frames, suggesting that the impact had to be adjusted such that picture and frame remained harmonised. In 1859, Faraday penned, in collaboration with A.W. Hofmann, John Tyndall, Richard Redgrave and Francis Fowke, *A Report into Lighting Picture Galleries by Gas*, in which they concluded that colour tests had shown that gaslight effected no change to object surface, whereas the whites showed signs of chemical damage either because of the 'town atmosphere' or 'lack of ventilation'. ¹³³

Why might Faraday have been interested in colour? Although the scientist is more widely associated with research in magnetism and electrics, he did investigate optics, focusing on how light and matter interacted. 134 In turning his attention to this topic, Faraday was entering contentious ground. The understanding of colour and its relationship to light had changed profoundly during the seventeenth century, when the predominantly Aristotelian and medieval construction of true and apparent colours was questioned, most notably by Newton. 135 In his 1665 experimentum crucis, Newton separated white light by projecting light through a circular hole and refracting it into a prism. Prior to his experiments it was widely believed that it was the prism which coloured light. 136 By contrast, in isolating one colour, Newton had demonstrated that colour was a component of ordinary daylight.¹³⁷ Significant questioning, conducted mainly in German scholarship, of Newton's colour theory began in the first quarter of the nineteenth century amongst philosophers and physicists. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Zur Farbenlehre* was published in 1810 as was Philipp Otto Runge's *Farbenkugel*. Six years later, Arthur Schopenhauer, whom Eastlake met in 1828, ¹³⁸ contributed to the debate with *Über das Sehen und die Farben* (1816). ¹³⁹ This German language colour theory, specifically Goethe's text, was of direct relevance to the National Gallery. In 1840, Eastlake published a translation of and commentary to Goethe's work, which Robertson makes clear met with mixed reviews. ¹⁴⁰ Sir David Brewster wrote of Eastlake's commentary: 'when he maintains that the experiments and views of Goethe are more applicable to the theory and practice of painting than the doctrines of Newton and his followers, we must consider him as placing the principles of his art in direct alliance with error'. ¹⁴¹

Significantly, he continued, 'but the notes are written with modesty and good taste'. It is these notes by Eastlake which will be the focus of the following discussion.

GOETHE'S COLOUR THEORY, MATT FRAMES AND INFLUENCING PERCEPTION

Goethe claimed, controversially, that colour perception was physiological and not a purely physical process, as Newton had maintained. There is clear evidence to suggest that Eastlake adopted a sceptical stance in relation to Goethe's findings, but claimed that it was, nonetheless, useful, especially for understanding Old Master paintings. He wrote:

But one of the most interesting features of Goethe's colour theory, although it cannot be a recommendation in a scientific point of view, is, that, it contains, undoubtedly with very great improvements, the general doctrines of the ancients and of the Italians at the revival of letters. The translator [Eastlake] has endeavoured, in some notes to point out the connexion between the theory and the practice of the Italian painters. ¹⁴⁴

The relevance of *Zur Farbenlehre* to painting is perhaps, unsurprising, as Goethe himself claimed, that his investigations into colour had been motivated by a painter's interest. ¹⁴⁵

Eastlake took Goethe's statement that '[from]... light, shade, and colour, we construct the visible world' and applied it to painting, arguing that painting, as nature, was formed of a series of contrasts, graduations and colour harmonies that act upon the visual perceptions of the viewer. ¹⁴⁶ Central to Goethe's thesis was the notion that colour arose from the interaction of light and dark edges. On this point, he noted: 'Next to light, a colour appears which we could call yellow; another appears next to the darkness, which we name blue. When these, in their purest state, and so mixed that they are exactly equal, they produce a third colour called green'. ¹⁴⁷

The viewer's eye was for both Goethe and Eastlake a fragile and easily influenced organ, which could misperceive under the wrong conditions. In his footnotes to Zur Farbenlehre, Eastlake applied Goethe's colour theory to the art gallery setting, arguing that the transition the viewer's eye made from brightness to shade (both in terms of the relationship between paintings and between the gallery environment and the painting) had to be strictly controlled, as even subtle changes in light could have a profound impact. 148 Eastlake used the example of the hang at the Dresden Gallery to illustrate his point concerning relativity in perception. There, a picture attributed to Titian, Madonna and Child of 1516 (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, inv. 168), hung next to Correggio's Madonna with Saint George (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, inv. 152). If, Eastlake claimed, the eye passed from the Correggio (Fig. 64) to the Titian (Fig. 65), the colours in the latter would appear insubstantial. If viewed in the opposite order, Correggio's usually fine gradations of light and shade would appear heavy. 149 Eastlake also demonstrated the relevance of Goethe's theory within paintings, by referring to specific art historical examples. He argued that the vitality of Titian's flesh tones were in part created by their proximity to white drapery. 150 If we follow Eastlake's logic, we must recognise that it would have been essential to manage the viewer's perception





- 64. Correggio, *The Madonna with Saint George*, 1530–2, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden
- 65. Titian, Madonna and Child, 1516, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden

of colours and tonal contrasts, which he regarded as characteristic of Italian Renaissance painting. ¹⁵¹ In these debates, the frame surface came to occupy a position of physical and perceptual importance, given that oil gilding was constructed as a conduit and moderator of light.

Eastlake argued that appropriate lighting was essential to the correct perception of colour in paintings. The Director made this clear in his recommendations in his open letter to the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, of 1845. He explained that different types of paintings required a specific lighting according to their special characteristics or, as in the Berlin Gallery, viewing would be highly compromised. Eastlake observed that in Berlin: 'The side light is abundant enough for the pictures that are close to it but the pictures furthest from the window are not sufficiently seen and those opposite the light are of course to a great degree sacrificed'. ¹⁵²

Cabinet pictures, for example, needed to be near strong light in order to best show their *chiaroscuro*. On a more general level, on account of the countering effects of pollution, a 'super abundance' of light was preferable. ¹⁵³ Eastlake maintained that light created by a skylight or lateral light, while properly illuminating the picture, would not dazzle the viewer. ¹⁵⁴ Indeed, he suggested that a lateral light would replicate the conditions in which the painter would have wanted his work to be seen in. ¹⁵⁵ Eastlake also discussed how the colour of the Gallery's walls might impact on the visitor's viewing experience. He argued that a painting should be displayed against a colour that was 'brighter than its darks and darker than its lights, and of so subdued a tint as may contrast well with its brighter colours'. ¹⁵⁶

Crucially, Eastlake recognised that the tonal relationship of a frame to a painting could also impact on the viewer's reception and perception of colour. On viewing Bartolomeo di Giovanni Corradini's *Birth of the Virgin* at Santa Maria delle Grazie at Senigallia (then attributed to Fra Carnevale), Eastlake wrote that 'the picture has a modern gold & bright blue frame which shows the grey colourless tone of the picture more'. ¹⁵⁷

His judgement specifically highlights the impact the brilliance

of the surrounding frame could have on the perception of the colouristic material qualities of the painting itself. In Eastlake's imaginary gallery of abundant light, an iridescent frame risked dazzling the viewer's eyes, suggesting 'the expediency of avoiding a superabundance of burnishing in frames especially in unbroken lines, and very near the pictures'. ¹⁵⁸ In contrast, an oil gilded frame, with its matt surface and duller appearance, would not magnify the light, dazzle or prevent the painting from being seen as the artist intended. Eastlake identified the best frame finish as one which had gilding of a 'soft splendour', arguing this surface would mediate most effectively between the wall colour and the colour tones in the actual painting. ¹⁵⁹

Using frames, alongside other curatorial apparatus, might have been a means of ensuring the correct colour perception of the paintings on display without altering the picture surface, an action which had become extremely controversial. This conclusion is supported by Eastlake's attitude to the Pettenkofer method of 'refreshing' paintings. The Pettenkofer process claimed to rejoin separated paint molecules, viewed as causing varnish to discolour, by using an alcoholic vapour. When Otto Mündler visited the Munich Pinakothek, he commented in his diary: 'Observed several pictures, whose surface has been 'regenerated' by [rejuvenating aged varnish] the proceeding of Professor Pettenkofer. The varnish looks brilliant and transparent ... In Munich (and elsewhere) this invention meets with strong opposition'. ¹⁶⁰

The Director's Report for the Board Minutes of 1864–1865 reveals not only that the Gallery experimented with the Pettenkofer process, but also Eastlake's full support of it. ¹⁶¹ In the report Eastlake described the process as a safe means of 'refreshing varnish' (and thereby making the picture surfaces seem brighter). He advised that the method be adopted at the National Gallery, maintaining that 'the optical effect of the original [picture surface] is restored solely by self-action ... and the surface of the picture remains clear as long as a newly varnished surface'. ¹⁶² It was also noted that the 'vapour acts most readily on mastic varnish', a characteristic which was particularly apt in relation to the use that Seguier had made of it. ¹⁶³ Eastlake stressed throughout his report

that the advantage of the method was that the painting did not have to be 'touched' and that the varnish would be rendered 'perfectly transparent'. ¹⁶⁴ It becomes apparent from these comments that Eastlake supported the Pettenkofer process because it created the desired effects of a bright and clear picture surface without making any controversial interventions. The same can be argued of oil gilded frames, which influenced the viewer's perception of the picture surface without making interventions to it.

MATT FRAMES AND ITALIAN RENAISSANCE PAINTINGS

But why is this discussion specifically relevant to Italian Renaissance art? To address this question, we can return to Anna Jameson, who claimed that the National Gallery should make clear to visitors the developments made in terms of colour and light by Leonardo, Michelangelo and Titian. Eastlake, for one, would have agreed. In his 1863 'Discourse', delivered at the Royal Academy in his capacity as its President, he argued that the greatest developments in painting came from the colourists of the sixteenth century. ¹⁶⁵ Eastlake also made a number of allusions as to how colour was made more luminous during this period. For example, in his references to the life of Antonello da Messina found in Vasari's biographies, he noted that the artist used a linseed oil mixture to illuminate his colours ¹⁶⁶ and maintain their vivacity. ¹⁶⁷

Returning to the *Descriptive Catalogue*, we can see that it makes frequent references to qualities of colour, tone and light, particularly in relation to Italian Renaissance painting. Alunno's paintings are characterised as 'bright and pure in colour', ¹⁶⁸ and Borgognone's palette is noted as 'delicate and pallid'. ¹⁶⁹ Cima da Conegliano is praised for his brilliance in 'colouring'. ¹⁷⁰ The catalogue also made comments on painters associated with the adoption of *sfumato* modelling. In the description of Correggio, Wornum and Eastlake wrote that the artist was 'still unrivalled in a certain harmony which results from delicate gradations of light and shade', ¹⁷¹ while Fra Bartolommeo was, according to his catalogue entry, 'distinguished for his effective treatment of light

and shade'. ¹⁷² These colour and tonal harmonies could, according to Eastlake, be best perceived if a painting was surrounded by a suitably gilded frame, and preferably placed in a sealed box.

Oil gilded frames surrounding Italian Renaissance art also engaged with debates concerning authenticity. In this period, cleaning could be linked by the National Gallery and its staff to the unmasking of fakes and to literal and metaphorical transparency. In the aforementioned 1853 *Art Journal* article, it was argued that 'The best advice that could be given to possessors of dark brown pictures acquired from this class of dealers, is certainly not to submit them to cleaning which might incontinently and inconveniently develop a mass of "dupery". '173

If oil gilded frames were a means of restoring the Gallery's paintings to their 'original' appearance, they could, by extension, help to reveal authentic picture surfaces, which would, in theoretical terms, be beneficial to a broad range of Gallery visitors.

Conclusion

Waagen's appeal to museum officials to provide their visitors with a sense of the original site of the paintings on display within the Gallery, could only ever be partially realised within the highly compromised museum environment. However, frames and framing could, in theory at least, have been used within this museological framework to suggest provenance and function. By the 1860s, East-lake and Burckhardt had successfully ensured that frames began to be read — at least in some quarters — as art historical documents in their own right. One factor thwarting the use of frames to enact Waagen's vision, was the controversy surrounding the panels, precisely because of their connection with their first context. Arguably, frames might have been a potent reminder of location. Chapter I showed that frames frequently connected with, and mediated between, the painting and the architectural environment.

Instead, the frames and re-framing discussed here might be read as a manifestation of an anxious art history. Historically vague re-framings ensured that harmony existed between the picture and frame surfaces, creating an aesthetic as well as a historical whole. The interventions made to the frame surfaces can be read as a means of strengthening the appearance of a whole object. In Arnheim's terms, this action closed the panel off from interpretations that might deviate from information contained in the National Gallery catalogues. 174 Theoretically, the creation of wholes guarded against visitors and press making controversial comments concerning provenance. Any potential for focusing on provenance was mitigated further by encouraging viewers to examine the physical characteristics of the paintings on display. Oil gilding old frames can be viewed as a means of emphasising the formal properties which Eastlake associated with Italian Renaissance painting and which he wanted connoisseurs and art students to respond to. On a theoretical level, the application of oil gilding created a connection through light with the wider gallery space. This observation differs from Ortega y Gasset's likening of a gilded frame as a glittering line severing the connection between inside and outside, possibly because they were rendered matt. Re-framing, and the interventions made to frames, meant that visual dialogues were created between the panels on display and the National Gallery environment, and the panels and their frames. Establishing these dialogues was essential as it firmly established the panels in their new environments, assisting with their 'museumification'.

- [1] Waagen, 'Thoughts on the New Building', 1851, 102. Waagen was not alone in promoting this display aesthetic. While giving evidence to the 1853 Select Committee, the archaeologist Charles Newton argued: 'We cannot appreciate the art of Phidias merely by contemplating the scattered fragments of his great design as they are presented to us in the Elgin room; we must study the larger figures and torsos as forming part of two great compositions set in the triangular frames of pediments'. NG15/8: Select Committee Appointed to Consider the Present Accommodation Afforded by the National Gallery, 1850, 772-78, Newton (letter) to Colonel Mure. Also cited in Whitehead 2005a, 73.
- [2] Dictionary of Art Historians: 'Anna Jameson' (https://arthistorians.info/jamesona; accessed 08/08/2024).
- [3] Wornum and Eastlake 1877, 3.
- [4] Ibid., 'Notice'.
- [5] NPG: Caldesi. He co-founded the photography studio Caldesi and Montecchi, in London.
- [6] Quoted in NG1/4: Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 12 Nov 1855 11 Feb 1871, Eastlake, 16 November 1857, 104.
- [7] Avery-Quash and Sheldon, The Eastlakes and the Victorian Art World, 2011, 12-13.
- [8] Southall, 'Emulation and Change', 1996, 122.
- [9] Merrifield, Medieval and Renaissance Treatises, (1849) 1999, v.
- [10] Ibid., viii.
- [11] Avery-Quash, 'The Happy Tour' in Notebooks, 2011a, 24.
- [12] Ibid., 20-23.
- [13] Eastlake, Methods and Materials, (1847) 1960, 72.
- [14] Ibid. Taken from Vasari's Lives (Vita di Dello).
- [15] Ibid.
- [16] *Ibid.*, 133. He cites the three predella pictures of the altarpiece of the Ascension in the Museum at Rouen as examples.
- [17] Anderson, I Taccuini manoscritti di Giovanni Morelli, 2001, 41.
- [18] Cited in Burckhardt, The Letters of Jacob Burckhardt, 1955, 127.
- [19] Burckhardt, The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance, (1860) 1985, 229.
- [20] Ibid., 229.
- [21] Ibid., 229-230.
- [22] Ibid., 230.
- [23] Ibid., 231.
- [24] Ibid., 230. Although Burckhardt also acknowledges that there were occasions when Antonio da Sangallo the elder and Baccio d'Agnolo also acted for Lippi. Here, again, Burckhardt took this information from Vasari's

- Lives (Vita di Baccio).
- [25] *Ibid.*, 231.
- [26] Humfrey, 'Editor's Introduction', 9-13 in Burckhardt, The Altarpiece in Renaissance Italy, 1988, 11.
- [27] Ibid., 47.
- [28] Burckhardt 1988, 48.
- [29] Ibid.
- [30] *Ibid.*, 55.
- [31] *Ibid*.
- [32] *Ibid.*
- [33] Ibid., 56.
- [34] *Ibid.*, 48.
- [35] *Ibid.*, 45.
- [36] *Ibid.* Formerly attributed to Cimabue and originally located in Santa Maria Novella, Florence.
- [37] The Lombardi-Baldi sale catalogue was entitled *Collection de tableaux anciens*.
- [38] NG1/3: Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 12 November 1855, 33.
- [39] *Ibid*.
- [40] NGFD: Dossier NG227.
- [41] Another exception is the earliest panel painting, *The Virgin and Child Enthroned with Narrative Scenes* by Margarito of Arezzo (1260s), which is in its original (although re-gilded) integral frame (NG564).
- [42] RNW Diary, 2 July 1857.
- [43] For later fifteenth-century examples of guilloche ornament see Lippi's frescoes at Spoleto.
- [44] See NGFD: NG292, Levi-Penny Survey.
- [45] RNW Diary, I July 1857. This image was reproduced in Davey, *National Gallery Frames*, 2012, NG272.
- [46] Mündler, The Travel Diaries of Otto Mündler, (1856) 1985,3 April 1856, 146.
- [47] *Ibid.*, 8 April 1856, 147.
- [48] Ibid., 5 January 1856, 91.
- [49] *Ibid*.
- [50] NG5/127/5: Letter from A. Zen, Venice respecting transmission of 14 pictures, frames, bill, 2 April 1856.
- [51] Mündler (1857) 1985, 22 May 1857, 239.
- [52] Davey 2012, NG286.
- [53] Mündler (1857) 1985, 23 October 1857, 184. Located in the Pinacoteca Malaspina, Pavia.
- [54] Whitehead 2007, 50.
- [55] Levi 2005, 33.
- [56] NG17/3: National Annual Gallery Reports, 1856-1867. NG5/21: Transcriptions of letters from Charles Eastlake to R.N. Wornum, 1855-1865. CLE to RNW, 6 April 1858.
- [57] Avery-Quash and Crookham 2014, 165.
- [58] Morris Moore, 'The National Gallery', 1857, 8. 'Works of art' included 'manuscripts, inscriptions, medals, statues,

- urns, bas-reliefs, torsi, heads, fragments, fonts, pedestals, pictures, antique paintings'.
- [59] Ibid., 10.
- [60] Ibid., 16.
- [61] Robertson 1978, 145-149.
- [62] Cited in *Ibid.*, 144.
- [63] Cited in Avery-Quash and Sheldon, 2011, 117. 'The Arundel Society', *Athenaeum*, 1858, 54-55.
- [64] Anderson 1990, 6.
- [65] Morris Moore, 'The National Gallery', 1857, 5.
- [66] *Ibid.* Morris Moore described the provenance as 'one Browne, tea and picture dealer'.
- [67] Whitehead, 'Architectures of Display at the National Gallery', 2005, 191.
- [68] Whitehead 2005a, 9.
- [69] Avery-Quash and Sheldon 2011, 39.
- [70] *Ibid*.
- [71] Ibid., 9.
- [72] Quoted in Ibid., 38.
- [73] Spence, The Lions of Florence, 1847, 86.
- [74] Eastlake, The National Gallery: Observations on the Unfitness of the Present Building for its Purpose, 1845, 3. Quoted in Whitehead 2005a, 11.
- [75] Klonk, 'Mounting Vision', 2000. On Goethe, 336, lighting, 340, and individuality, 340.
- [76] Whitehead 2005a, 38.
- [77] Cited in Rees Leahy, "Walking for Pleasure"?, 2007, 76. From Gladstone, *The Gladstone Diaries*, 1978, 234.
- [78] Cited in Ibid., 79. ETB, What to see and where to see it!

 Or the Operative's Guide to the Art Treasures Exhibition,
 1857. 4.
- [79] Falke, Art in the House, 1879, 211.
- [80] RNW Diary, 'F'.
- [81] NG1/4: Board Minutes 1855-1871, 16 November 1857, 102.
- [82] RNW Diary, October 1857. 'The Prince Consort visited the Gallery this day at 2 o'clock, to see the new pictures. Expressed himself greatly delighted by the Paul Veronese, thought some of the frames in bad condition, and recommended The Vandermeir to be put into a case'.
- [83] Mason and Gregory, Of Gilding, 1989. No pagination.
- [84] I am grateful to Isabella Kocum for this observation.
- [85] RNW Diary, 11 April 1856.
- [86] Ibid., 14 December 1857.
- [87] Ibid., 31 July 1857.
- [88] I am grateful to Isabella Kocum for showing me the oil gilding process.
- [89] Benson 1914, 49.
- [90] Mason and Gregory, 1989.
- [91] Dossie, Handmaid to the Arts, 1757, 412. Cited in Ibid.

- [92] Anon., The Painter's Gilder's and Varnisher's Manual, 1903, 140.
- [93] Eastlake 1845, 14.
- [94] Smith et al., 'An Altarpiece and its Frame', 1989, 32.
- [95] Ibid., 37.
- [96] Ibid., 34.
- [97] Baker and Henry 1995, 61. For a definition of 'tondo' see Appendix 1.
- [98] Technical analysis undertaken with Isabella Kocum.
- [99] NGFD: NG275. Inorganic analysis of frame conducted by the National Gallery Scientific Department (Gabriella Macaro, 27 February 2013).
- [100] Brommelle, 'Controversy in 1846', 1957, 258.
- [101] Anderson 1990, 5.
- [102] Quoted in Robertson 1978, 95.
- [103] *Ibid.* During this period mastic varnish was the preferred choice of restorers and picture collectors.
- [104] White and Kirby, 'Varnish Compositions', 2001, 64.
- [105] Avery-Quash and Sheldon 2011, 20.
- [106] Cited in *Ibid*. See RA Archive: LAW/4/2: CLE to Lawrence, Rome 12 February 1822.
- [107] To the extent that the painter became known for his clarity and colour. See *Ibid*.
- [108] Clare, 'Dirty Pictures', 2002, 118-119.
- [109] Ibid., 121.
- [110] Talley, 'Miscreants and Hottentots', 1996, 28.
- [111] Robertson 1978, 95.
- [112] Anon., 'Picture Cleaning in the National Gallery', 1853, 30.
- [113] Cited in Clare 2002, 132, 'Bravo, Boxall, Well-Done Wornum!' *Punch*, or, the London Charvari 51 (Jan-Jun 1866, 8-9).
- [114] Charles Thackrah investigated the subject of dust during the 1830s. While Karl Marx characterised dust as the most dangerous product of the Industrial Revolution. Steedman, *Dustr* 2001, 20.
- [115] NG5/84/2: Eastlake, Faraday and Russell, Report on the Subject of the Pictures in the National Gallery by Glass, 24 May 1850, 1.
- [116] Ibid.
- [117] Faraday, Lecture on Light and Ventilation, 1843, 8.
- [118] *Ibid.*, 10.
- [119] Ibid., 18.
- [120] NG5/84/2: CLE, Faraday and Russell, 1850, 2.
- [121] Ibid.
- [122] Ibid.
- [123] Ibid.
- [124] Ibid.
- [125] Ibid., 3.
- [126] Eastlake 1845, 18.
- [127] NG5/84/3: Eastlake, Faraday, and Russell, Further Report

- on the Subject of the Protection of the Pictures in the National Gallery by Glass, 1850.
- [128] NG5/84/2: Eastlake, Faraday and Russell, Report on the Subject of the Protection of the Pictures, 1850, 3.
- [129] Ibid.
- [130] *Ibid*.
- [131] NG1/3: Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 4 February 1856, 33.
- [132] Faraday, *Life and Letters*, 2010. Eastlake to Faraday, 18 June 1859, letter no. 3603.
- [133] NG5/137/6: Faraday, Hofmann, Tyndall, Redgrave and Fowke, Lighting Picture Galleries by Gas, 1859.
- [134] James, 'The Optical Mode of Investigation', 1985, 137.
- [135] Gage, Colour and Culture, 1993, 153.
- [136] König and Collins, 'Goethe, Eastlake and Turner', 2009,
- [137] Ibid. Newton published his findings in the Royal Society's journal, Philosophical Transactions, under the title 'Theory of Light and Colours' (1872) and then as Theory of Colour (1704), where he also discussed primary colours (see 230).
- [138] Robertson 1978, 54-55.
- [139] Runge, On Vision and Colors, 2010, 13.
- [140] See Klonk 2000.
- [141] Quoted in Robertson 1978, 54 from the *Edinburgh Review* (David Brewster), October 1840, 72.
- [142] Ibid.
- [143] König and Collins 2009, 230.
- [144] Goethe, Goethe's Theory of Colours, (1840) 1967, xiii.
- [145] König and Collins 2009, 230.
- [146] Goethe 1867, xi-xiii.
- [147] Ibid., xlii.
- [148] Ibid., 3.

- [149] Ibid., 371.
- [150] Ibid., 360, note C. Par. 80.
- [151] Ibid., xiii.
- [152] Klonk has drawn attention to the significance of these quotations previously. Eastlake 1845, 10.
- [153] Ibid.
- [154] Ibid., 13.
- [155] Ibid.
- [156] Ibid.
- [157] Eastlake 2011a, Travel Notebooks, 439.
- [158] Eastlake 1845, 6.
- [159] Ibid., 15.
- [160] Cited in Anderson 1985, 46.
- [161] NG1/4: Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 12 Nov 1855–11 Feb 1871, 1864–1865, 138. The process involved '[t] he picture [being] exposed to an atmosphere saturated with vapour of alcohol at the ordinary temperature'. This was thought to join together previously separated molecules.
- [162] Ibid., 139.
- [163] Ibid.
- [164] Ibid.
- [165] Eastlake, Discourse delivered to the Students of The Royal Academy, 1852.
- [166] Eastlake, Methods and Materials, (1847) 1960, 205.
- [167] Ibid., 209.
- [168] Wornum and Eastlake 1877, 22.
- [169] Ibid., 40.
- [170] *Ibid.*, 62.
- [171] Ibid., 74.
- [172] Ibid., 209.
- [173] Anon., 'Picture Cleaning', 1853. 30.
- [174] See Chapter 1, 24 of this thesis.



IV Re-framing the Italian Renaissance at the National Gallery in the 1880s: The case of the San Giobbe frames

I now move to a later moment in the nineteenth century, which does not lend itself to analysis in the same terms as the 1850 to 1880 period. Instead, I focus on a particular frame type that can be considered distinctive to the National Gallery's collections, at a time when the Renaissance canon was being re-evaluated. In the Introduction, I alerted the reader to the presence of three frames modelled on the portal ornament of San Giobbe in Venice. They were commissioned for the National Gallery under the third Director, Sir Frederic Burton (1874-1894) and his Keeper, Charles Locke Eastlake (1878-1898), nephew of the Gallery's first Director. It is likely that all three frames were made by the firm of Dolman & Sons in London during the 1880s. During the same period, nineteenth-century gilded-oak cassetta, or 'Watts' style frames, were used to frame a diverse range of paintings regardless of their school or date. Their presence highlights not only the quality of ornamentation and design of the San Giobbe frames, but how specifically and carefully they were employed. It is this characteristic that renders them an apt area of study, since they reveal how Renaissance panels could be literally and conceptually re-framed and re-presented. 66. Leonardo da Vinci, The Virgin of the Rocks, about 1491/2-9 and 1506-8, National Gallery, London (Neo-Renaissance San Giobbe frame)

As is the case with so many re-framing decisions taken at the National Gallery, the reasons for applying the San Giobbe frame type to The Virgin of the Rocks (NG1093) (Fig. 66), The Ansidei Madonna (NG1171) (Fig. 67) and The Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints George (?) and John the Baptist (or Pala Strozzi, NG1119) (Fig. 68) are not recorded in the archival documents I have consulted. None of these paintings have an obvious connection to Venice in general, still less with the Church of San Giobbe. It must be acknowledged that their introduction and repetition might have been a decision led by the frame-makers. However, even if this is the case, the frames clearly effect how the altarpieces are presented as objects and therefore the reception of the paintings they contain, especially when they are examined in dialogue with one another. In this chapter I shall question whose decision and underlying motivation it was to fashion a frame based on the San Giobbe portal? Why the portal ornament might have been viewed as a suitable expression of the 'Renaissance'? And consider how the frames related to the National Gallery's new architectural interiors, particularly the Taylor extension, and to its revised collecting and hanging policies. I shall also discuss the factors motivating the repetition of the frame design and its application to three fundamentally different altarpiece fragments. The last question invites consideration of what was known about the original appearance and function of the panels.

It should be stated from the outset that the type of evidence that informs this chapter is of a different nature to that available for the first two. As there is no equivalent document to Wornum's diary for this period, concerns regarding re-gilding and ornamentation, which were clearly an important part of the Keeper's daily responsibilities, are not articulated in extant sources. This does not mean that these issues were not considered. Instead, the *lacuna* in terms of day-to-day information surrounding framing can be filled by material which relates more generally to the training and interests of both Keeper and Director and their thoughts on the subjects of frames and on the Italian Renaissance specifically.

Frederic William Burton was born in County Clare, Ireland.¹ He trained as a painter at the Dublin Society Schools, and exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy on a regular basis from the

age of sixteen.² In 1851, Burton was invited to Munich by King Maximilian of Bavaria to restore and copy paintings in the collection of Ludwig I and he stayed for seven years.³ It is thought that he became familiar with emerging art historical methodology while in Munich.⁴ Certainly when he was appointed Director of the National Gallery in 1874 Burton could demonstrate the connoisseurial skills required for the position. The content of Burton's catalogue entries, and his acquisitions policy and correspondence held in the National Gallery archive, allow one to suggest the nature of the issues which might have motivated his re-framing decisions, particularly his aesthetic preferences and connections with the Aesthetic Movement.

It became apparent through my analysis of Wornum and his role in the formation of the 'Gallery' frames, discussed in the first chapter, that responsibility for frames and framing fell to the Keeper of the National Gallery. These decisions were clearly underpinned by the Director Eastlake's conceptual understanding of Italian Renaissance painting and his personal preferences for a particular ornamental style. Such a division of duties continued for the rest of the nineteenth century. As previously stated, under Burton's Directorship, his Keeper was the younger Eastlake, who also served under Boxall. Eastlake junior trained as an architect and although he did not build or design a significant building, he became Assistant Secretary at the Institute of British Architects, a post he held until 1877. What remains of his architectural oeuvre is a design he submitted to a Royal Academy Exhibition entitled Design for a Renaissance Palace (1855), a number of drawings of architecture (all with measurements) made in France, Italy and Germany and his sketchbooks that include frame designs. His main contribution to architectural writing was A History of the Gothic Revival (1872). Eastlake junior showed his credentials as an art historian in his guides to leading European art collections and the articles he published on hanging and the National Gallery exhibition rooms. He also established himself as a leading authority on domestic taste. In his major publication, Household Hints, he discussed the suitable form and ornamentation of frames. Re-framing decisions at the National Gallery in this period were motivated by both Eastlake junior's and

(Overleaf left)

67. Raphael, *The Ansidei Madonna*, 1505, National Gallery, London (Neo-Renaissance San Giobbe frame)

(Overleaf right)

68. Lorenzo Costa and Gian Francesco de Maineri, The Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints, about 1498– 1502, National Gallery, London (Neo-Renaissance San Giobbe frame)





Burton's opinions on style and their art historical expertise.

Finally, it should be noted that both Burton and Eastlake junior adopted different positions to their predecessors in relation to contemporary art and architecture. This may account for the influence of Aesthetic re-framing practices on display at the National Gallery. The presence of Aesthetic movement frames adds an additional layer of complexity and enables further exploration of canon construction and its display in the late-nineteenth century.

CONSTRUCTING THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE: ART HISTORY AND THE ART GALLERY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The intricate, frequently concealed and often problematic connection between art galleries, the art historical discipline and the art market have long been debated. For Elizabeth Mansfield the relationship between institutional collecting, display and art history is a natural one, as both art history and museums emerged from a modernist impulse. She argues that the transformation of art history into a discipline in the nineteenth century was dependent upon external conditions, namely industrialisation and imperialism, which came together with widening participation in education and culture. Art history was thus 'welcomed' into arenas associated with 'urban leisure, public education and national pageantry'; museums as we have seen, such as the National Gallery, intersected all three areas. It

In the previous chapters, I showed that both frame selection and the treatment of their surfaces were inextricably linked to the concerns of mid-nineteenth-century connoisseurship and the perceived social agency of the museum space. Here, I demonstrate how the act of framing directly intervened in the construction of the Renaissance canon as it was pursued during the later nineteenth century at the Gallery. In particular, I explore the value new frames conveyed, in terms of both cost and quality, of Italian Renaissance paintings including Ferrarese panels.

Paula Findlen has shown that the 'Italian Renaissance' was, in part, a 'museological phenomenon' that emerged from debates amongst connoisseurs and collectors in Italy during the 1760s on how to make the 'renaissance' of art visible in their collections. As evidence of this, she cites the eighteenth-century Grand Tourists who believed that they had seen the 'Renaissance' in the Uffizi. For example in 1764, the English historian Edward Gibbon (1737–1794) remarked: 'Here one sees a series of paintings of the most ancient masters before the Renaissance of painting, and one can follow all the steps that this art made until its perfection'. ¹⁴

For Gibbon, Fra Angelico (c. 1395–1455) embodied the pre-Renaissance, and Raphael (1483–1520), 'perfection'. ¹⁵ Findlen argues that nineteenth-century museum visitors inherited and subsequently reinvented the eighteenth-century myth of the 'Renaissance', constructed in the museum. Jules Michelet, who coined the term, maintained in *Renaissance* (1855) that his visits to the Louvre were instrumental in his conception of the Renaissance, writing 'in the pictures of da Vinci, shines the spirit of the Renaissance, at its most fierce, sharp, and restless'. ¹⁶ And as we saw in the previous chapter, Burckhardt drew many of the conclusions he made in *Das Altarbild* (1894) from altarpieces he had seen in churches in Lombardy and, importantly, at the Brera Gallery, Milan. ¹⁷

However, what constituted 'the Italian Renaissance' in painting remained both ambiguous and contentious, within and outside of the National Gallery. During the late-nineteenth century the Italian Renaissance canon in its widest sense was re-considered in a number of arenas: art historical criticism (Crowe and Cavalcaselle), literature (Walter Pater), poetry, contemporary art (the Pre-Raphaelites and the prints commissioned by the Arundel Society) and photography of buildings and art works (Fratelli Alinari). These shifts were governed, as Jenny Graham has shown, by culturally constructed values. Hitherto, the roles of frames and framing have not been used to further illuminate or question the construction of the Renaissance in the museum sphere despite the fact that, as I show here, they intersected many of the areas mentioned above.



REFOCUSING ON FRAMES

In the preceding chapters, I argued that the concern Sir Charles Eastlake and Wornum showed for the design, ornament and gilding of frames at the National Gallery, which manifested itself in Neo-Renaissance Gallery frames, was inextricably linked to and stimulated by the highly charged ornament debates, by emerging discourses concerning picture restoration and conservation, issues raised by connoisseurship and spectatorship, anxiety surrounding contested attributions and changes to the perceived function and responsibilities of the National Gallery as a public museum space. 19 It would be reasonable to expect a certain level of continuity in re-framing policy between 1850 and 1890, given that the younger Eastlake was Wornum's immediate successor and not only cast as his uncle's natural heir by the widowed Lady Eastlake, but also deeply influenced by his thinking.²⁰ Meanwhile, critics viewed Burton, on account of the quality of the acquisitions he made during his early years as Director, as continuing Sir Charles' legacy.²¹

What the written sources make obvious is that despite the apparent continuum between the Eastlake-Wornum and Burton-Eastlake junior eras, attention actually only renewed and refocused on frames and framing during the late 1880s while interest in the subject had ebbed in the 1870s. This phenomenon might be attributed to fundamental and diverse shifts in cultural and aesthetic positions that took place within and outside the National Gallery towards the close of the 'long nineteenth century'. It will be shown that these changes impacted on the institution as a whole, and re-framing policy in particular. Problematically for Burton and Eastlake junior, these fundamental changes often conflicted with one another, exposing frames as sites of tension and the re-framing process as one potential vehicle for resolving these conflicts.

In the course of the nineteenth century, the term 'Renaissance' began to be used regularly, albeit not consistently, particularly following the translation of *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (1860) by Jacob Burckhardt into English in 1878. ²² Roman Catholicism ceased to be as controversial as it had in previous decades, allowing the National Gallery to display altarpiece frames without the fear

of hostility from the government, public and press. Attitudes to-wards ornamental style had also changed. Although Eastlake traced the connection between Roman Catholicism and Gothic architecture in *A History of the Gothic Revival*, it should be emphasised that he described this connection as belonging firmly in the past, thus freeing elements from the Gothic style being burdened with specific symbolic associations.²³

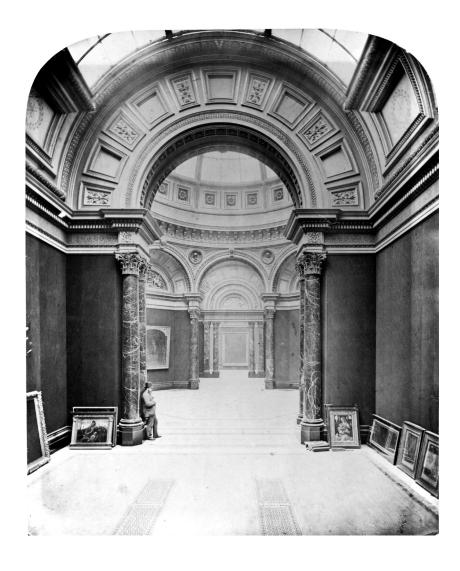
It is also important to recognise how far the reputation and curatorial practices of the National Gallery had altered between the 1850s-1860s and the 1880s-1890s. Mrs Jameson maintained in 1842 that any comparison with European picture galleries 'would be invidious and absurd'. ²⁴ By the late 1890s the National Gallery had come to be celebrated as a site of national importance and a source of patriotism and pride, a change that was accompanied by a shift in critical and public expectations of it. In one article published in 1891, J.F. Boyes wrote: 'If an Englishman were to be asked ... which of the great public institutions of his metropolis he regarded with greatest pride, he would probably hesitate in reply between the British Museum and the National Gallery'. ²⁵

Boyes proceeded to alert the reader to the fact that the National Gallery occupied one of the 'finest sites in Europe', emphasising the expense of its 'contents' and the half a million visitors it received each year in comparison to the mere thousands visiting the Louvre, the Uffizi and 'Rycks' (sic – Rijksmuseum) Museum. ²⁶ Boyes also referred to the donations and bequests made to the National Gallery as 'patriotic gifts'.²⁷ However the relationship between patriotism and the National Gallery was problematic. On the one hand, under Burton, a number of the National Gallery's acquisitions came from British collections (for example, from the Alexander Barker Sale of 1874 and the Wynn Ellis Bequest in 1876). The problems associated with buying and exporting paintings from Italy, which had been subject to criticism under Sir Charles' Directorship, were to some extent mitigated, although controversy still arose. On the other hand, a new concern came to the fore that masterpieces that had been in British collections were being sold abroad, diminishing the brilliance of British cultural life and riches. In light of these tensions, the National Gallery had to show that its walls were the natural

home for such paintings, to celebrate its contents and demonstrate that it could rival the cultural wealth of other European nations (notably Germany) and the emerging American private collectors and nascent art institutions. One means of achieving this, at least theoretically, was through the use of impressive frames which harmonised with the internal ornamentation of the galleries in which they were displayed, emphasising that the panels belonged there.

Furthermore, the importance of the National Gallery's curatorial and conservation functions were justified and intensified by Italy's ambiguous treatment of its cultural heritage in the late-nineteenth century. Roeck examines the paradox that is marked by the establishment of the Società Dantesca Italiana in 1888 in Florence²⁸ and the almost simultaneous destruction of 451 ancient Florentine botteghe and 173 magazzini, to make way for the Piazza della Repubblica.²⁹ The threat posed to the medieval remains of Florence stimulated an English movement to protect the city.³⁰ On 2 December 1888 an open letter to the Mayor of Florence, Pietro Torrigiani, was published in The Times and reproduced in La Nazionale, protesting against the demolitions.³¹ The letter had been signed by, amongst others, the English artists Edward Poynter (future Director of the National Gallery), Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Holman Hunt and George Frederick Watts, all of whom can be associated with the National Gallery in this period.³² Similarly, there was widespread shock and anger regarding the partial destruction of the West front of St. Marks in Venice. International protest was led by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings that William Morris had founded in 1877 to continue the work of the Arundel Society.³³ In this context the National Gallery found a legitimate role as guardian of Italian art, providing a safe environment in which to display and conserve painted panels. Picture frames, whose major function was to protect and honour their contents, could also act as a commentary on conservation and protection. Indeed, Burton was conducting a policy of glazing very nearly every painting in the National Gallery's collection. Both activities were highly visible manifestations of the Gallery's commitment to preservation.³⁴

At the same time new architectural projects, notably the Barry Rooms (1876) (Fig. 69) and the Taylor extension (1887) (Fig. 70)



69. Hanging in the Barry Rooms, or Room XV and Octagon Room (present-day Galleries 40, 36) in 1887 (looking north); in the background, Rooms VIII, VII (present-day Galleries 37, 32), National Gallery Archive, London

(space for which was created by the vacating by the Royal Academy of Trafalgar Square in 1869), allowed Burton and Eastlake junior, to begin to organise and display the National Gallery's paintings according to school and period. This display strategy had only been partially realised by Sir Charles and Wornum owing to limitations of space, and would not be achieved fully until the following century. Following the Vasarian framework for the idea of artistic improvement in Italy from 1300 to the death of Michelangelo, Director and Keeper claimed that geo-chronological divisions allowed for the effective display of the development of art, the pinnacles of which were Raphael, Leonardo and Michelangelo.

As we saw in Chapter 1, heightened consciousness of the National Gallery's purpose and public responsibilities in 1855 increased consideration of frames and framing. In the specific institutional

(Overleaf)

70. Sir John Taylor Extension (present-day Central Hall; looking south), National Gallery Archive, London





context of the National Gallery in this period, frames and framing policy intersected and mediated between the architectural environment in which the paintings hung, the hanging rationale and the paintings they surrounded. This resulted in their having a strong bearing on the formation of a canon, particularly in relation to the Ferrarese School. Moreover, the architectural models that inspired the designs of the frames for these environments also function as a commentary on the buildings and ornament privileged during the late-nineteenth century, and the changing geographical borders of the 'Renaissance'.

Two contrasting frame styles: The 'Watts' frame and the San Giobbe frames

In an 1891 Art Journal article, the aforementioned J.F. Boyes maintained that the younger Eastlake's main achievement was improving the design characteristics of the minor arts through his publication, Hints on Household Taste. Indeed, Eastlake's ideas on household style were so influential that the term 'Eastlaked' came into common parlance, especially in America. 35 The term denoted interiors which reflected his taste for oak furniture modelled on that from the medieval (Gothic), Elizabethan and Jacobean periods [English Renaissance], and which rejected Rococo and Renaissance revivals. Jettisoning the latter categories was a result of Eastlake's belief that Medieval and Tudor furniture exhibited honest craftsmanship and beauty.³⁶ As Snodin and Styles point out, Hints on Household Taste was symptomatic of a shift away from thinking about objects as independent entities towards considering the aesthetic effect of objects within interiors as a whole, which is vital for understanding the presence of the San Giobbe frames in the Taylor extension,.³⁷

Hints is revealing for the present study because Eastlake inserted frames and framing into the debates he explored surrounding ornament and function and, in so doing, encouraged a new frame type.³⁸ The Keeper described, and possibly designed, a frame in terms of its practical roles in the domestic sphere.³⁹ First came a structural/conservation argument, namely that frames gave addi-

tional strength to the light 'strainer' of wood, i.e. stretcher, and held the glass covering the artwork securely. Secondly, Eastlake maintained that frames formed a border between the painting and the external world and in doing so focused the viewer's attention.⁴⁰ Eastlake, like his uncle, claimed that the gilding of the frame influenced the viewer's reception of the colours in the painting.⁴¹ With this in mind, Eastlake described the ideal picture frame as being made of oak, not 'deal slips lightly glued together', and with carved ornament (rather than ornament moulded in composition). 42 Elaborate decoration such as, 'fat gilt cupids, the coarse and clumsy mouldings, the heavy plaster cornices, and the lifeless types of leaves and flowers' were to be avoided because they had the potential to distract the eye and create shadows on the painting. 43 Instead 'variety', a quality thought to keep the viewer alert and receptive, could be introduced by gilding directly onto the oak, thereby allowing the texture of the wood below to be visible. This, Eastlake argued, would avoid the monotony created by smooth gilding over composition.⁴⁴ Essentially Eastlake had described what is now referred to as a 'Watts' frame (because they frame so many works by G.F. Watts), which he claimed provided an effective and non-distracting vehicle through which to view paintings. 45 Although Eastlake's comments were made in reference to frames in the domestic setting, there is evidence to suggest that he was also addressing the needs of museums and galleries in similar terms. Examples of the 'Watts' frame can be found still surrounding paintings in the National Gallery, the example illustrated here (Fig. 71) frames an image of The Madonna and Child after Raphael (NG929). Furthermore, Robert Benson identified the 'Watts' frame as a particular problem during the Curzon Enquiry (1914), mainly because they had been applied to a number of paintings regardless of artists or schools. For example, in one room Benson counted thirteen examples of the 'Watts' frame, on pictures by Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, George Romney, Thomas Lawrence, John Opie, John Hoppner and John Everett Millais. 46 Benson's total list of 'Watts' frames encompasses a variety of subject matters and periods, serving to underline that the frames had no specific relationship with the paintings they surrounded.⁴⁷ Arguably they



were intended to function as a type of economical, practical and tasteful viewing apparatus within the National Gallery environment and create a sense of uniformity, in contrast to the San Giobbe frames, which draw attention to particular paintings.

71. After Raphael, *The Madonna and Child*, probably before 1600, National Gallery, London (nineteenth-century 'Watts' frame)

THE SAN GIOBBE FRAMES AND THE SAN GIOBBE PORTAL

Until 2010, there were three similar tabernacle frames (the key characteristics of which are their flanking pilasters, frieze and entablatures with or without herette) on display at the National Gallery, each decorated with crisply-executed ornament. On the pilasters, against a punched ground, a rinceaux-like ornament depicts birds feeding from honeysuckle flowers which are in turn interspersed with acanthus scrolls. The frieze has a naturalised version of a palmette motif and a key decorative component of the cornice is egg-and-dart motif above fluting. In each instance the sight edge is formed of a leaf-ornamented ogee profile moulding. As I have stated previously, the three frames were modelled on the ornament of the portal of San Giobbe in Venice, an ornament that, according to Deborah Howard, can be attributed to Pietro Lombardo and dated to circa 1480 (Figs. 72 and 73). Importantly the carving is regarded as the first manifestation of the Tuscan Renaissance in Venetian architecture. The Tuscan, as we have seen, was viewed as the 'true' Renaissance in the late nineteenth century, although this perception was in the process of changing.⁴⁸

Prior to 2010, the San Giobbe frame type surrounded Leonardo da Vinci's *The Virgin of the Rocks* (1508) (NG1093), which was purchased by the National Gallery in 1880 from the Earl of Suffolk. A frame of the same design, also made of wood and composition, still contains Raphael's *The Ansidei Madonna*(NG1171) (1505), which was acquired in 1885 from the Duke of Marlborough's Blenheim Palace sale. A variant of the San Giobbe frame, without skulls to the capitals, frames *The Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints George (?) and John the Baptist* (1499) by Lorenzo Costa with Gianfrancesco Maineri (NG1119). This painting was acquired rather problematically

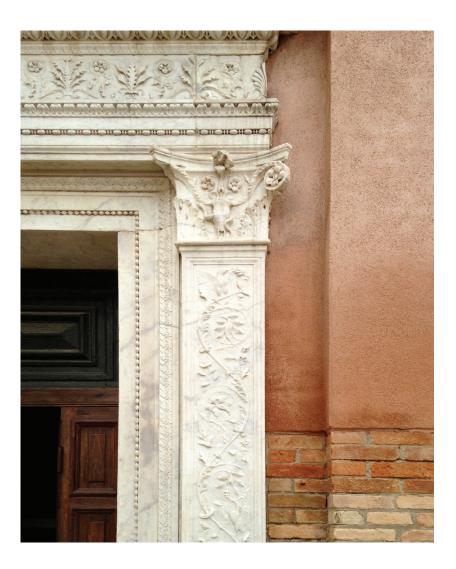
 Pietro Lombardo, Doorway of the Church of San Giobbe, about 1480, Venice



from the Marchese Strozzi in 1882 and assigned to Ercole Grandi. As Leonardo's *The Virgin of the Rocks* (NG1093) was the first of the three paintings to be acquired by the National Gallery, it might be suggested that it provided the model for the other two San Giobbe frames. As it will be shown, these paintings were considered to be art historically significant, as were the collections that they came from.

The Levi survey dates the San Giobbe frames to the 1880s (the one surrounding Ercole Grandi is inscribed '1886', a date which refers to its acquisition and not re-framing). ⁴⁹ It would seem a reasonable assumption that they were first hung in this decade by Burton and Eastlake, as all three of the paintings they surround were acquired during this period. The Levi survey gives no explanation for the dating. Indeed, the *rinceaux* and acanthus ornamentation of the San Giobbe frames may initially seem similar to the Neo-Re-

 Pietro Lombardo, Doorway of the Church of San Giobbe (detail of Fig. 72)



naissance frames commissioned by Wornum during the 1850s and 1860s. However, the San Giobbe frames fundamentally differ from their predecessors and represent an important moment of departure and innovation in National Gallery frame design. This is because they replicate the form and ornamentation of a complete architectural structure, as opposed to being comprised of ornamental details taken from various sources of different dates.

The frame to Raphael's *The Ansidei Madonna* (NG1171) bears the stencil mark of the London-based frame-makers Dolman & Sons (Dolman) and Nicholas Penny has proposed the same maker on this basis for the Leonardo and Costa-Maineri frames (Fig. 74). ⁵⁰ Dolman dominated the production and design of frames for, and the process of, framing paintings in English museums and by Royal Academicians in the later nineteenth- and early-twentieth-centu-

 Stamp of frame maker Dolman & Son on the reverse of the frame of Raphael's Ansidei Madonna (see Fig. 67)



ries. ⁵¹ The fact that two composition versions of the San Giobbe frame exist at the National Gallery, seems to reflect Dolman's wider practice of using a relief material (composition or 'compo') which could be squeezed from a mould and repeated multiple times to replicate the same frame for different paintings. On the reverse of the frame to Hubert von Herkomer's *Sir George Goldie* (1898) in the National Portrait Gallery, a Dolman label reads: 'This frame can be repeated at any time quoting the number 30.886'. ⁵² The idea that a frame pattern could be reproduced for a totally different painting, reinforces aspects of my analysis of Wornum's Neo-Renaissance gallery frames; namely that a specific link between paintings and their frames was not always sought and that, instead, we must look beyond the frame's relation to the painting to identify the logic of their selection.

Lynn Roberts argues that repetition of frame patterns or types marked the lowest ebb of English frame making, being symptomatic of a lack of creativity and skills. ⁵³ However the San Giobbe frames are technically complex and seem to have engaged creatively with the problem of the need to cover such large paintings with glass, as Burton's glazing policy demanded. The capitals, pilasters and bases are detachable, enabling the paintings to be inserted into the frames easily and facilitating the construction of a glass door to protect them. ⁵⁴ The spandrels allowed the two arched-top paintings (Leon-

ardo's *The Virgin of the Rocks* (NG1093) and Raphael's *The Ansidei Madonna* (NG1171) to be inserted into a rectangular frame. Furthermore, rich leaf pattern ornament, which corresponded to that in the pilasters, was incised into the spandrels and bases of the San Giobbe frames to *The Virgin of the Rocks* and *Ansidei Madonna*. This area could have been left blank, but the incised decoration seems to have been an attempt to ensure that all elements of the frames harmonised and cohered in decorative terms. This would, in turn, focus the viewer's attention and ensure that the frame functioned to assist viewing, rather than creating a distracting visual disjuncture. Finally in the case of *The Ansidei Madonna*, the San Giobbe frame covers the extra wood that extends below the panel, and therefore solved both an aesthetic and conservation problem.

THE SAN GIOBBE FRAMES: CONTEXT AND WHOLENESS

The San Giobbe frames clearly resemble altarpiece frames, and it is tempting to view them as attempts to recreate something of the original visual and conceptual context of the altarpiece fragments they framed. But I do not believe that in the context of the National Gallery, the San Giobbe frames were being called upon to produce a sacred space or a porta coeli, nor could they. The sense of rupture associated with removing a perspectively-conceived altarpiece from its original architectural environment is perhaps most evident in the Ansidei altarpiece (NG1171) made for the chapel dedicated to Saint Nicholas in the church of San Fiorenzo, Perugia. Raphael planned the composition carefully using calculated geometry, as the division of the picture surface into grids suggests. 55 Despite Raphael's meticulous preparation, changes were made to the composition. Technical analysis demonstrates that the fictive barrel vault was added after Raphael had begun painting. 56 Cooper and Plazzotta refer to two sources which noted that the architecture of the chapel and the frame to the altarpiece were particularly plain, ⁵⁷ and use this to claim that Raphael added the illusion of a vaulted chapel at a later date to compensate for a lack of structure in the actual chapel.⁵⁸

It appears that, for very different reasons, alluding to the original





 Giovanni Ambrogio de' Predis, An Angel in Red with a Lute (see fig. 76) (Neo-Renaissance frame)

 Giovanni Ambrogio de' Predis, An Angel in Red with a Lute, about 1495– 9, National Gallery, London (twentyfirst-century cassetta frame)

devotional function of the paintings was of secondary importance to Burton and Eastlake as it had been to Sir Charles and Wornum. In relation to this point, it seems significant that there is a noticeable change between the content and language employed in the abridged catalogues (the 1887, 1888 and 1889 versions are used here) and the more detailed *Descriptive and Historical* catalogues (in this instance the 1892 version). It is only in the latter that the provenance of the paintings was included, and that their function as altarpieces is referred to. This type of information was excluded from the abridged catalogues, suggesting it was not deemed to be of paramount importance to general audiences.

Although the interpretation of the contract we have for Leonardo da Vinci's *The Virgin of the Rocks* (NG1093) leaves scope for

debate, we now know from the attached lista (an inventory listing the painter's duties) that it was most likely to have been part of a very large multi-panelled polyptych, with painted and sculpted parts. ⁵⁹ This source was not available in the nineteenth century. In the full catalogue of 1892, the transformations of and contextual changes to The Virgin of the Rocks are described, although it is never referred to as an altarpiece. Following Luigi Lanzi, Burton states that the first location of the painting was the chapel of the Conception in the Church of San Francesco, Milan, where it remained until sometime between 1751 and 1787. Burton traced the subsequent history of the panel through Girolamo Bianconi's Nuova Guida di Milano (1787). Bianconi reported that it was no longer in the church of San Francesco, but that the 'two panels, between which it had hung, each containing an angel playing a musical instrument, were still in situ'. 60 Burton took Bianconi's description to mean that The Virgin of the Rocks had been the central element of a triptych and referred to the panels by Giovanni Ambrogio de Predis (NG1661 and NG1662) inaccurately enough as 'side wings'. 61 In the Art Journal of 1898, the year the National Gallery acquired the De Predis panels, it was reported that the Leonardo 'triptych' with pendants by De Predis was 'complete'. 62 A photograph from 1923 held in the National Gallery archives suggests how the idea of 'complete' was interpreted. It shows the 'side wings' by De Predis in similar, but smaller versions of the San Giobbe frames, flanking the main panel (Fig. 75). This arrangement suggests the idea of a triptych without resorting to physically attaching the paintings to one another. The Leonardo case study demonstrates how readings of historical sources informed the presentation of altarpieces and affirms the important part that framing played in supporting those readings. 63 In -2010, both The Virgin of the Rocks and the two panels by De Predis were re-framed for the monographic exhibition on Leonardo. The guilloche ornament at the sight edge of the main frame was used as the main ornament of the frame to the De Predis panels, creating a visual dialogue between the separate parts (Fig. 76). In normal circumstances the works are now not shown directly next to one another, perhaps owing to the fact that the two smaller panels are considered to be qualitatively inferior to the painting by Leonardo.

Raphael's The Ansidei Madonna (NG1171) was described as an 'altar-piece' in the full *Descriptive Catalogue* of 1892. ⁶⁴ The reader learns that it was made for the Ansidei family and placed in the Servite Church of S. Fiorenzo, Perugia until 1764. 65 As was the case with The Virgin of the Rocks, the fragmentary nature of the altarpiece is recorded. Burton notes that the predella, formed of three parts, was missing from the panel. The reader is informed that two parts of this predella were now lost, but the third part, showing Saint John the Baptist Preaching (NG6480), was in the collection of the Marquess of Lansdowne⁶⁶ (acquired by the National Gallery in 1983). 67 The San Giobbe frame creates an ambiguous relationship with the original ensemble. A false sense of completeness was suggested by filling the predella area with text detailing the name of the artist and title of the painting. Arguably this area of the frame was introduced to give height and proportional coherence to the whole composition and maintain the visual connection with the other paintings in San Giobbe frames.

According to the 1892 Descriptive Catalogue, 'Ercole Grandi's' The Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints (NG1119) had previously been in the church of the Concezione at Ferrara and then removed to the convent of S. Cristoforo degli Esposti, from where it was purchased by the Strozzi family. ⁶⁸ Wornum identified a lunette depicting the Pietà (which is now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Ferrara), as being part of the altarpiece. ⁶⁹ Once again, the San Giobbe frame conceals absences and loss by creating the impression of a complete work on the walls of the National Gallery.

It is evident from the catalogue entries outlined above that it was known that these fragments were parts of larger ensembles. But in general terms, the San Giobbe frames transformed each panel into a single field *pala* in an *all'antica* frame, creating an appearance of wholeness and a visually pleasing arrangement on the Gallery's walls. This highlights the fact that Eastlake junior and Burton did not use frames in a strictly historicist fashion. Indeed, if Burton and Eastlake junior had wanted to suggest the original context of each altarpiece, they would not have framed the three panels in almost identical frames. This re-framing approach at once reduces the differences between the panels and affects the viewer's perception of

them in different ways. In the case of *The Virgin of the Rocks*, the San Giobbe frame has the effect of pushing the rocky landscape further back and bringing the Virgin Mary forward. With Raphael's *Ansidei Madonna*, the physical arch of the San Giobbe frame echoes the internal arches in the composition, while the predella effectively creates an extra step up to the Virgin's throne. Finally, in the case of the Costa-Maineri painting, the San Giobbe frame relates to the arch above the Virgin's throne, a relationship that is strengthened through the use of ornament in the painting and the frame. The distinct way that the San Giobbe frame type affects the composition of each painting, and its reception by the viewer, is indicative of the fact that these were very different types of altarpieces, which the common frame type disguises.

We might read the San Giobbe frames as standing for or signifying the 'Renaissance' in general terms, rather than the Renaissance chapel context in particular. From our reading of Burckhardt in the previous chapter, it is obvious why a tabernacle or *all'antica* frame was thought to be characteristic of the 'Renaissance'. It remains puzzling why the San Giobbe portal was selected to 'stand' for the concept in the National Gallery during the 1880s. To interrogate this further, the status of Venice and San Giobbe in relation to the wider concept of the Renaissance as it was understood at the time, requires examination.

SAN GIOBBE AND THE 'RENAISSANCE'

'Architecture' was defined in *Architecture: Classic and Early Christian* (1888); thus, 'we imply by the use of the word that these buildings possess merits which entitle them to rank as works of art'.⁷⁰

Aside from the interesting elision of art and architecture, this statement demonstrates that issues of quality and excellence were implicit in the definition of 'architecture' at the end of the nineteenth century. The application of the term necessarily excluded buildings that were not considered to meet these criteria. Neither was the canon of architecturally significant buildings stable, as is demonstrated by John Murray's introduction to his 1847 guide

for travellers to Northern Italy. This guide provided information on architecture, paintings, restaurants and lodging. It began: 'Of the objects here pointed out to the traveller, most have long been thought worthy of inspection and admiration; some, however, have not; but have risen into notice through a periodical fluctuation of taste and opinions'.⁷¹

In Chapter 2, we observed that ornament from Florentine architectural sculpture, the pilasters of the Château Gaillon in Normandy and the Miracoli church in Venice were used to ornament frames. The arrangement of casts at Crystal Palace in 1854 and specifically Matthew Digby Wyatt and J.B. Waring's guide to *The Renaissance Court in the Crystal Palace*, provide a means of understanding how the buildings listed above related to constructions of the Renaissance made for public consumption during the 1850s, and offer a point of comparison with the National Gallery's presentation of it. For Digby-Wyatt and Waring, the high point of the Renaissance was during the 'Cinquecento', when antique forms were combined with those from the natural world.⁷² Indeed, this synthesis was part of their definition of the 'Renaissance', which 'implies not the revival of antique art only, but the return to that great school which keeps nature open to us'.⁷³

Moreover, the Renaissance was, for Digby-Wyatt and Waring, a phenomenon that could be pursued through reference to 'its great discoveries' and 'names'. 74 It is therefore unsurprising that their 1854 guide focuses on canonical buildings and ornament by canonical architects and sculptors. For the writers of the guide, the Renaissance was essentially Florentine, notably pioneered by Filippo Brunelleschi and his pupil Michelozzo Michelozzi, together with Lorenzo Ghiberti and Donatello. 75 The authors also celebrated Château Gaillon and the pilasters from the tomb of Louis XII in France for their Renaissance ornament, while the contributions of Spain, Germany and England to the Renaissance were treated in shorter sections. What is illuminating is that the publication makes almost no references to Venice, its buildings and architects, beyond noting the names of the Lombardi, as a dynasty of sculptors, and Alessandro Leopardi (a Venetian sculptor and architect 1466-1512) and stating that they worked between 1450 and 1510.76 The implication of the relative absence of Venice is that the city was not then viewed as embodying the Renaissance as then defined. The relative dearth of Venetian carving at the Crystal Palace seems strange nonetheless, given the popularity of the city in the nineteenth century. Although the fall of the Venetian Republic in 1797 meant that political analogies were no longer drawn between the great maritime powers of Venice and Britain, the city still occupied a place in the British cultural imagination, particularly its painting and architecture. 77 After the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, Turner made three visits to the city between 1819 and 1840, Lord Byron resided there between 1816-1819 (Sir Charles Eastlake lived in Byron's palazzo later on), and the Layards chose to retire to the Grand Canal. Venice was also a firmly established stop on the tourist trail.⁷⁸ The influence of Venice was particularly evident in England in the sphere of architecture. In 1820 Sir Charles Barry was commissioned by William John Bankes to transform Soughton Hall, Wales, into a Northern Italian villa. To accomplish this task he used architectural salvages, including adapting the ceiling from the Palazzo Contarini in Venice for the so-called Spanish Room.⁷⁹ This was not an isolated episode. Benjamin Disraeli commented that '[Venetian] Palaces are now daily broken-up ... consigned to Hanway Yard and Bond Street whence, reburnished and vamped up... figure in the boudoirs of Mayfair and St. James's'. 80

Neither was the interest in Venice restricted to salvages but extended to the recreation of its characteristic ornamental motifs. In 1872 John Ruskin remarked: 'there is scarcely a public house near the Crystal Palace but sells its gins and bitters under Pseudo Venetian capitals, copied from the Church of the Virgin of the Health'. ⁸¹

Once again, Wornum emerges as the instrumental figure who assisted wider tastes and fashions to gain purchase at the National Gallery. In his publications on ornament, Wornum connected Venice and the Lombardi with the Renaissance. In Catalogue of Ornamental Casts of the Renaissance Styles (1854), Wornum provided an extensive history of the Lombardi family of carvers, sculptors and architects, who were predominantly based in Venice. This history and illustrated explanation was needed, Wornum argued, because the Renaissance casts at South Kensington were mainly taken from

monuments in Brescia and Venice, which was in itself an idiosyncratic choice to 'illustrate' the Renaissance. However, while the artists of the Brescian monuments were unknown, many of the Venetian monuments could be attributed to the Lombardi. This suggests that, like many of his contemporaries, Wornum thought that specific authorship was important. 82

Taking his information from Temanza's Lives of the most celebrated Architects and Sculptors of Venice of the Sixteenth Century (1777), Wornum focused on the head of the family, Pietro Lombardo. He was a native of Lombardy, architect and sculptor, who was responsible for what nineteenth-century audiences viewed as the most important buildings in Venice. These buildings included the Torre dell'Orologio, the Fondaco de'Tedeschi and S. Maria dei Miracoli.83 Wornum isolated the Miracoli for particular praise, describing it as 'among the most distinguished [buildings] in Venice for its ornamental arabesques'. 84 Wornum concluded his discussion with a list of buildings in Venice with which the wider Lombardi family could be associated, including San Marco. San Giobbe however did not appear in the first edition of Wornum's Catalogue of Ornamental Casts or in subsequent republications. This was doubtless because there does not appear to have been a plaster cast version of the San Giobbe portal at the South Kensington Museum. However, a photograph of the portal of San Giobbe was acquired by the South Kensington Museum during the 1860s. The photograph is composed of five separate prints that combine to show the righthand side of the portal, focusing on anthemion and honeysuckle rinceaux, and the palmette of the entablature. 85 However, the San Giobbe portal was not incorporated into the architectural ornament of the South Kensington Museum itself.

The absence of San Giobbe from Wornum's catalogue was not simply a museological, architectural and art historical phenomenon. It should be remembered that the church occupied a fairly remote spot in Venice. In John Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* of 1853, San Giobbe goes unmentioned. ⁸⁶ However, by the time of the fourteenth edition of the publication (1877), it merits mention. The author notes that San Giobbe was located 'at the N[orth]. W[est]. extremity of the city' and built in the style

of the Lombardi (not actually attributed to Piero). 87 The Murray guide praised the 'interesting' works of art that San Giobbe contained. This would not have included Bellini's 'San Giobbe' altarpiece as it had been removed to the Accademia in 1815, although its stone frame must have still been visible there, together with the arabesques on the pilasters, frieze and arches of the choir, associated with the Lombardi style of the 1470s. 88 Vitally, from the perspective of the San Giobbe frames, the travellers' attention is drawn to the entrance, which Murray describes as 'a fine specimen of the Renaissance style in the 15thcent[ury]'. 89 This comment suggests that the church of San Giobbe, and its portal specifically, had been linked to the concept of the Renaissance by the 1870s. Importantly, Murray notes that the building is 'neglected and decayed'. 90 The physical neglect of San Giobbe, combined with its non-central location and lack of direct connection with the Lombardi, might account for its omission from previous accounts of the city's architecture.

As Elsa Damien has argued, the development of Murray's guides to Northern Italy and Ruskin's literature on Venice were inextricably linked. Ruskin had read Murray's guides from their advent at the end of the 1830s. 91 In 1845 and 1846, Ruskin outlined his concern to Murray that buildings and works which were crucial to understanding Italian civilisation had been omitted and that other buildings were described in terms which suggested that the writer had never visited them. As a result, Ruskin contributed notices to the 1846 and 1847 editions of Northern Italy (i.e. before he had written The Stones of Venice), which were reproduced and modified in subsequent editions. 92 One might suggest that it was Ruskin's influence that led to a heightened awareness of San Giobbe and its portal in particular. In The Stones of Venice (first published 1851-1853), Ruskin wrote: 'Church of San Giobbe ... Its principal entrance is a very fine example of early Renaissance sculpture. Note in it, especially, its beautiful use of the flower of the convolvulus. There are said to be still more beautiful examples of the same period in the interior'. 93

The paragraph quoted above was reproduced in The Stones of Venice. Introductory Chapters and local indices of travellers while





- Giovanni Gaggini, Doorway surmounted by a figure of Saint Stephen and carved relief of the Nativity, 1879, Victoria and Albert Museum, London
- Plaster cast after Jacopo della Quercia's central doorway for the Basilica of San Petronio, about 1886, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

staying in Venice and Verona of 1906. It is interesting to note, from the final sentence, that Ruskin had not accessed the church interior and this perhaps accounts for his focus on the portal, rather than the carvings inside the church. By the early twentieth century, the San Giobbe portal was firmly established in the literature on Venice. By 1924 Adolfo Venturi published L'architettura del Quattrocento, which included an extensive description of the 'bella porta' of San Giobbe by Pietro Lombardo. 94

Charting the reception of the San Giobbe portal suggests that, by the 1880s, it was known and celebrated as an example of Venetian Renaissance ornament in the Tuscan style by Pietro Lombardo. Arguably the vast majority of visitors to the National Gallery would not have recognised the San Giobbe frames as a commentary on the changing status of the church, the Lombardi or even Venice, within the historiography of the Renaissance canon. They may

however have recognized it as a doorway. Interestingly a number of doorways were collected by the South Kensington Museum during the 1870s and 1880s, in both sculpted and plaster form. These included a doorway surmounted by a figure of Saint Stephen and carved with a relief of the Nativity by Giovanni Gaggini purchased in 1879 (Fig. 77) and a plaster cast of the Central doorway to S. Petronio, Bologna, acquired in 1885 (Fig. 78). I argue that in the specific environment of the Taylor extension, the San Giobbe frames were called upon as portals, framing art historical vistas, in an Aesthetic, 'palace of art' environment.

THE SAN GIOBBE FRAMES AND THE AESTHETIC MOVEMENT

Fiona McCarthy describes a Christmas party attended by Edward John Poynter, William de Morgan, William Morris and Frederic Burton, that suggests close personal friendships. 95 These men also shared professional interests. On settling in London after returning from Munich, Burton came under the influence of the Aesthetic painters and their admiration for Venetian Renaissance painting, particularly that of Titian, evidence of which is visible in his own paintings.⁹⁶ Moreover the later Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic artists supported Burton's attempted acquisition of the Blenheim paintings, which as we have seen included The Ansidei Madonna (NG1171). In April 1884, Frederick Leighton passed on a letter on behalf of the Royal Academicians to William Gladstone, in which they stated that the Blenheim paintings were 'unique in their excellence and beauty'. 97 Amongst the signatories were Leighton, Millais and Alma-Tadema. In April 1884, the painter William Wallis wrote to Gladstone describing the Blenheim paintings as 'National heirlooms' and 'landmarks in the history of art'. He continued that it would be a 'stigma' to allow the paintings to leave British shores. 98 The other signatories included Edward Poynter and William Morris. It is noteworthy that the supporters of the acquisition of the Blenheim paintings for the nation were the same group of men who had joined together to protect Italian heritage and who were exhibiting at, or were associated with,

79. Horace Harrai, The Entrance to the Grosvenor Gallery, New Bond Street (from The Graphic, May 1877, p. 480)



the Grosvenor Gallery, London.

The Grosvenor Gallery, which opened in May 1877, was conceived by its founder, Coutts Lindsay, as an alternative exhibition space to the Royal Academy, where Aesthetic art could be displayed in a suitable (beautiful) environment. ⁹⁹ The model for the Grosvenor Gallery was a 'Palace of Art', a term taken from a poem of the same name by Alfred Tennyson (1832). ¹⁰⁰ The Gallery was purpose-built in the Italian Renaissance style. Indeed its marble doorway had been salvaged from the Church of Santa Lucia in Venice, when it was demolished to create room for the train station in 1866 (Fig. 79). ¹⁰¹ Additionally, the entrance hall was flanked by Genoese marble columns and Ionic pilasters which, as we shall see,

were sympathetic to the Italianate interiors of the Taylor extension, in which the San Giobbe frames were located. The architectural and ornamental references to Renaissance palaces on display at the Grosvenor Gallery appear to have been recognisable constructs to Burton and Eastlake's contemporaries. For example, the Italian Renaissance art historian Julia Cartwright (1851–1924) wrote in her diary: The gallery is very splendid, a Grand Palazzo entrance with vases and marble scattered about'. 103

I propose that Dolman & Sons were an essential conduit in the connection I would draw between the frames surrounding Aesthetic paintings and the San Giobbe frames at the National Gallery. We know that Dolman were employed at the National Gallery on the recommendation of the Royal Academician, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912) from 1880 to 1919, after the previous framer, Henry Critchfield, was exposed for double-charging his employers. 104 The services that Dolman offered became increasingly specialised over the period in which they were engaged at the National Gallery. In 1883 the company described themselves as, 'carvers, gilders and decorators, dealing in picture frames, furniture, glasses, chimney glasses, girandoles, brackets, cornices and ceiling flowers'. 105 By 1892 Dolman had limited their practice to framing and art restoration, advertising their business as 'Art Frames', specifically creating frames based on artists' drawings, carved or composition reproduction frames, and glazing, cleaning, lining and restoring pictures. 106 Immediately one can see that if a frame-maker worked for artists and for the National Gallery, the possibility for overlap in terms of frame designs is increased and this prevents one from simply understanding the San Giobbe frames (made by Dolman) with reference to the National Gallery's own concerns as a historic collection, which in any case can never be isolated from wider aesthetic debates.

The Pre-Raphaelites and Aesthetic artists popularised Renaissance frame designs and re-conceptualised their traditional associations. Roberts argues that the resurgence of the 'classical', meaning a tabernacle or *all'antica* frame, was linked to Alma-Tadema, Poynter, Burne-Jones and Holman Hunt. ¹⁰⁷ She identifies Burne-Jones' trip to Italy with Ruskin in 1861 as a key episode in the revival of



 Edward Burne-Jones, Story of Troy (Troy Triptych), about 1872-98,
 Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery,
 Birmingham

the *all'antica* frame. During this journey, Burne-Jones visited the church of San Zeno at Verona, where he saw Mantegna's early altarpiece of the *Virgin and Child with the Saints* (1448). ¹⁰⁸ Roberts maintains that the fictive frame in Burne-Jones's *Story of Troy* (Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, 1870) must have been based on the frame surrounding Mantegna's altarpiece at San Zeno (Fig. 80). ¹⁰⁹ However, despite the shared tripartite structure, there are distinct differences between the two frames, especially the absence of a lunette in the *Story of Troy*. The San Giobbe frames appear to be closest to the frames used by Burne-Jones during the 1870s.

For the art historian, Elizabeth Prettejohn, Burne-Jones 'systematically obliterated the distinction between fine and decorative art'. Continuing that his paintings were 'no longer easel paintings at all. Now they are unequivocally decorative art'. This obliteration was clearly demonstrated in the eight works that he exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877. One painting entitled *The Days of Creation*, 1872–76 (Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums) (Fig. 81) was divided into six panels and placed in a Renaissance-style frame. The frame and paintings appear to be one single – and in Aesthetic terms, beautiful – object, an effect which was indicative of the wider aims of the Aesthetic Movement.



A relationship between the San Giobbe frames and the Grosvenor Gallery connects National Gallery framing activity with Aesthetic painters who exhibited there (Albert Moore, Frederic Leighton, Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones), with aesthetic criticism (Walter Pater) and with the 'art for art's sake' dictum, all of which promoted a belief in the primacy of the pursuit of beauty both in art and life. Reading the San Giobbe frames through the activities of the Grosvenor Gallery and Aestheticism gains purchase when Charles Saumarez Smith's argument that the Barry Rooms and Taylor extensions reflected an ideological shift in the purpose of the National Gallery, is taken into consideration. ¹¹³ For Saumaurez Smith, the importance that men like Ruskin had placed on the National Gallery as a site for reforming the working classes diminished, replaced by Pater's Aesthetic criticism and his insistence on the importance of beauty. 114 Pater described the student of Aesthetics as having a temperament that was 'deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects'. IIS He encouraged such students to ask themselves a series of questions as they looked at the artwork. These included, 'What effect does it produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence and under its influence?'117 But how did beauty connect with the National Gallery's aims and

81. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Days of Creation*, 1870-6, Harvard Art Museums, Harvard (original nineteenth-century frame, now lost)

objectives in the late nineteenth century?

H. E. Tidmarsh depicted the National Gallery's interiors in a series of watercolours of the 1880s. In one, a woman is shown seated, gazing at *The Ansidei Madonna* (NG1171) (Fig. 5). The ceiling ornament confirms that the interior in which the painting was displayed as part of the Barry Rooms. The painting, not yet in its San Giobbe frame, is shown with a curtain around it and a barrier in front of it. The curtain works in two main ways, isolating the painting from the rest of the collection and imbuing the viewing process with a sense of drama and revelation. In earlier depictions of the National Gallery, examined in Chapter 2, there were no barriers, allowing visitors to get close to the paintings. By contrast, in Tidmarsh's watercolour, the visitor is physically distanced from the artwork, positioned to contemplate it reverently. By pushing out the external, the frame is clearly crucial to the rendering of the aesthetic experience. But analysis of hanging and canon formation in the 1880s at the Gallery reminds us too that we cannot limit our interpretation of the San Giobbe frames to the rendering of the aesthetic experience.

SAN GIOBBE AND ARCHITECTURAL COMMISSIONS AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY

The National Gallery's new architectural commissions refocused critical attention on its museological responsibilities and priorities, the most appropriate ornamentation of its interiors and, by extension, (re)framing. Sir John Charles Robinson (1824–1913), first superintendent of the South Kensington Museum from 1852 and a dealer, decisively shaped the English nineteenth-century taste for Italian Renaissance painting and decorative art. He commented upon the potential of methods of display in the proposed new National Gallery interiors, writing: 'The new National Gallery should be a decorous and noble edifice ... The containing casket may and ought to be beautiful'. ¹¹⁸

He proceeded, 'but the safe-keeping and proper display of the gems within it are the really essential points'. ¹¹⁹ This statement ar-

ticulated what Robinson argued should be the twin aims of the National Gallery: to conserve its collections (through appropriate lighting, ventilation and temperature regulation) and to allow the gems, by which he presumably meant the most treasured paintings, to 'shine' and 'attract' visitors. These statements strongly suggest that the National Gallery wanted to lead, almost lure, its visitors to paintings that were representative of specific art historical moments, an observation which resonates with Carol Duncan's idea of the museum being a site for ritual encounters. The culmination point might here be imagined as being seated in front of *The Ansidei Madonna* (NG1171) in a state of contemplation. Arguably, reading the appropriate catalogue entry to the painting would heighten the efficacy of this experience.

The question of the characteristics of an appropriate casket, which could certainly also imply the picture frames, was a contentious one. On 15 February 1866, an initial invitation was issued by the Office of Works to selected architects entitled Circular to Competing Architects. It invited designs for a new National Gallery that would create wall space for paintings combined with 'grand architectural effects'. 122 Within this environment, the invitation stipulated that the paintings had to be 'well lighted and well seen'. 123 However, the competition entries, which were mainly a response to the call for 'grand architectural effects', were considered disappointing because they did not fulfil contemporary expectations of a properly functioning art gallery. Robinson, for example, lamented the number of 'Domes, campaniles and loft halls', which were deemed superfluous to the building's purpose. 124 The commission was eventually given to Edward Middleton Barry and after wrangling and compromise, he built an octagonal domed gallery with four galleries running off it, decorated with coloured marbled columns and Italianate polychromatic decoration; in effect a 'Palace of Art' along the lines of the Grosvenor Gallery model. Artists' names could be read in the lunettes in Galleries 12 and 14 and their portraits featured in roundels in the Octagonal Hall. 125

On completion, the Barry Rooms attracted the attention of the press. On the 29 July 1876 the *Art Journal* compared the Barry Rooms favourably to 'the dingy old rooms'. The anonymous reviewer noted the 'Noble proportions, a wealth of fine marble and wood, rich mouldings and heavy gilding' and concluded that they were 'magnificent examples of architecture'. ¹²⁶ It is in these types of review that frames as caskets assumed a place in the perceived relationship between viewing, the painting, and ornament. *The Times* review of the Barry Rooms read:

In the principal Italian Gallery, where the magnificent pictures of the Venetian and allied schools ... all in splendid old frames of altar pieces or the grand entablatures of Italian palaces. To take in the full beauty of such an assemblage as this, the spectator has necessarily to stand at the opposite side of the room, and then it is that the gilded arcades above the pictures ... become more prominent than is conducive to repose. ¹²⁷

The reviewer clearly understood what Renaissance palace and church frames looked like. However, he seems unaware that the 'splendid old frames' surrounding the 'masterpieces' were in fact re-framings. Indeed, by the time of the 1876 catalogue, the only old (in fact 'original') altarpiece frame surrounded the *Madonna della Rondine* by Carlo Crivelli (NG693), which had been acquired in 1862. As we saw in Chapter 2, the surface of this frame had been altered to make it suitable for the National Gallery interiors. These alterations would have made it difficult to distinguish the old *Madonna della Rondine* frame from the recently commissioned Neo-Renaissance frames. For the reviewer, the combination of a painting within its frame, regardless of age, created a 'beautiful' 'assemblage', which was best apprehended in a state of repose. For this critic, excessive gilded arcades threatened both the spectators' contemplative calm and the harmony of the assemblage. 129

We might conclude from the extract above that ornate frames surrounding 'masterpieces' were acceptable, but overwhelming (gilded) architectural ornament was not. In the same year, an anonymous reviewer in *The Architect* ruminated on whether the ornamentation of the rooms should have taken their tone from the frames and paintings, as was apparently the case in the Barry Rooms. He mused 'whether it is better to take the pictures and their frames

as the key note and decorate up to that pitch ... or to be content with the more humble style that makes the interior of the gallery subdued and grave in its ornamentation'; and he concluded that 'what was suitable and becoming in the *Loggie* of the Vatican or in the great hall of the Riccardi Palace would be quite unfit for the requirements of a picture gallery'. ¹³⁰

Indeed, the Palace of Art aesthetic was complicated by the fact that the National Gallery interiors were also, and fundamentally, spaces where specific art historical readings of Italian Renaissance art had to be displayed for, and understood by, the viewer. Criticism of the perceived failures of the Barry Rooms in terms of its ornament and ornamentation must have influenced the final appearance of the Taylor extension (1887). I argue that if the San Giobbe frames were made with the new Taylor interiors in mind, they too might have been imbued with these modified expectations of the proper roles of the art gallery.¹³¹

The extension built by Sir John Taylor (1833–1912)¹³² might be viewed as an adaptation of the Palace of Art interior for the National Gallery. An 1887 review in *The Builder* of the Taylor extension just after its completion described the decoration as being in a 'low tone' (which I assume referred to the toning down of the gilding) and 'Renaissance [in] character'. The Building News review of the new interior praised the 'worthy entrance', 'pillars of serpentine marble', 'interior arches', 'mosaic floors' and the glass dome which allowed for a 'full flood of day light'. Taylor also included 'massive' doorways constructed from *rouge etrusque* Numidian marble in each room. The size and magnificence of the doorways was architecturally redundant (unless their size actually allowed the paintings in). Instead the doorways were an expression of architectural and decorative magnificence that opened up aesthetic and art historical vistas (Fig. 82).

It appears that Taylor was playing with an allusion to the Renaissance palace in an almost theatrical way, within the highly constructed environment of the National Gallery. The San Giobbe frames seem deliberately to relate to the real architectural environment of the Taylor extension, composed of arcades and pavements, and to the fictive architecture within the paintings (in the instances of



 Portrait busts of Rembrandt, Leonardo and Correggio, 1887, Taylor Extension's entrance to Gallery I (present-day Central Hall), National Gallery Archive, London

The Ansidei Madonna (NG1171) and The Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints (NG1119). The intention seems to have been to create a whole environment, or architectural casket, for the three paintings in question. The setting would enable the onlooker to look onto a complete vista constructed of multiple frames. As one of these, the San Giobbe frames were a culmination point that created an opening into the fictive space of the painting. Although not conscious, the fact that the frames were constructed around the architectural device of a portal might have heightened the notion of a vista being opened up by a highly contrived doorway.

It should, however, be noted that the San Giobbe frames were not successfully embedded in the Taylor extension. Eastlake junior lamented that the 'uninterrupted vista' he had intended had been frustrated by screens. ¹³⁶ Furthermore, if one examines Giuseppe Gabrielli's depiction of visitors in the Barry Rooms (Fig. 83) one can see that the paintings were double hung in some instances and crowded together, and presumably these compromises would also have been evident in the Taylor extension. The effect of the vis-



ta must have been further diminished by the fact that the frames seem to project emphatically from the wall, rather than integrating with and opening it up as a doorway does, or an embedded frame might in a chapel wall. Despite these failings, the concept of the vista was clearly vital to Eastlake's conception of the hanging. In the paragraphs below, I shall outline what he was attempting to shape and define.

The central feature of Taylor's design was a screen, the ornament of which indicates how the Palace of Art interior was altered for the art gallery. A reviewer described this screen as being composed of 'three arched openings' and 'lofty frieze with over-door and pediment, ornamented with scroll patterns grouped around three medallion rings'. The 'medallion rings' (Fig. 84) were in fact roundels containing sculpted busts of Rembrandt, Leonardo, Correggio, Rubens, Titian and Raphael, inserted into the screen and interspersed with arabesque decoration. The screen, which had no apparent architectural function other than as an entry point to the Gallery, is constructed in a form akin to tabernacle frames,

83. Giuseppe Gabrielli, *The National*Gallery 1886, Interior of Room 32,
1886, National Gallery, London (on loan from the Government Art Collection,
London)

Portrait bust of Raphael, 1887, Gallery
 I (present-day Central Hall), Taylor
 Extension, National Gallery, London



with ornamented pilasters in keeping with, but not exactly the same as, the pattern of the San Giobbe frames. Clearly, the roundels, which alluded to the art historical canon and the celebration of the genius of individual masters, were a means of embedding essentially Vasarian values into the very structure of the art gallery.

The San Giobbe frames supported the role of the screen described above in relation to the formation of the canon and specifically the positioning of Raphael within it. 139 In the final sentences of the same review, the writer encourages the visitor to pause at the entrance and look, 'right through the new galleries' from which vantage point they would be able to see The Ansidei Madonna (NG1171) (framed in a San Giobbe frame) in the last room (VI). Presumably they were to conclude that Raphael and his Ansidei Madonna marked the culmination point of the development of the history of Italian Renaissance painting. This construction was in keeping with the presentation of Raphael in the National Gallery catalogues, where he was described as the 'natural heir to all the Renaissance had achieved'. 140 The painter was similarly celebrated as an apex in art in the medallions on the walls, Sidney Smirke's portrait busts of preeminent British and Italian artists at Burlington House and the Albert memorial in South Kensington.

PICTURE-HANGING AND ART HISTORY

The new exhibition spaces at the National Gallery offered Robinson and Eastlake junior the opportunity to debate the subject of picture-hanging in journals such as *The Nineteenth Century*. The issues discussed ranged from the highly practical – namely how best and safely a painting could be attached to a wall – to conceptual concerns surrounding the placement of pictures in relation to one another and the canon. Robinson, for example, perceived that the new National Gallery could liberate what was displayed from the tastes promoted by the art market. He wrote the 'it will be no longer possible to confine the representation of art of former times within narrow conventional limits which dealers, auctioneers, and picture collectors have heretofore mainly imposed'. ¹⁴¹

Picture hanging at the National Gallery became inextricably linked to its collecting policies (and, more specifically, justifying them), which can in turn be related to the construction of the Italian Renaissance canon. Arguably the San Giobbe frames played a key role in intervening in, and establishing, this canon as it was displayed by Burton and Eastlake junior.

Burton's determination and success in acquiring paintings by artists who had not previously been represented in the National Gallery had been lauded as the greatest of his achievements. In an article entitled the 'The Administration of the National Gallery (a retrospect)', Eastlake junior listed Burton's collecting coups as 'Leonardo da Vinci (NG1093), Ercole di Giulio Grandi (NG1119), Benvenuto da Siena (NG909), Signorelli (NG1133), Savoldo (NG1031), Lo Spagna (NG1032), Franciabigio (NG1035), Fiorenzo di Lorenzo (NG1103), Nicolo da Fuligno (NG1107) and Ubertini (NG1218 and NG1219)'. 142 This list clearly includes several lesser-known Italian painters. In 1891 Boyes examined what had motivated Burton's acquisition policy. He explained that Burton did not acquire paintings based on 'beauty' or 'importance' but on whether they could demonstrate a link in the 'history of its painter and of Art'. For Burton this is what distinguished the National Gallery from a private collection, where the ruling motive, Boyes thought, was the gathering together of a 'cluster of

gems'. ¹⁴³ Burton and Eastlake junior argued that the best way of showing the connections between artists and artistic development was to hang the National Gallery's paintings by regional School. ¹⁴⁴

In electing to hang the National Gallery's paintings by School, Burton and Eastlake junior were continuing a questioning, which had begun in the eighteenth century, of a single artistic ideal dominating standards of taste. It was replaced with the belief that different artists could be judged by different standards according to the period and place in which they were working. ¹⁴⁵ It was during this period that Luigi Lanzi began to identify the distinctive qualities of each Italian 'school' in his *Storia pittorica dell'Italia* (1792–98). ¹⁴⁶ Findlen characterises the *Storia* as a reading of Vasari's *Vite* 'against the grain', overturning the idea that the Renaissance was a purely Tuscan phenomenon by celebrating the achievements of other schools and painters.

However, hanging by school also presented Eastlake junior and Burton with difficulties, not least because Vasari's Lives and the values it advocated were entrenched in English art historical criticism and, arguably, taste. Furthermore, although Eastlake never stated this, Renaissance painters often worked in a number of centres and for different patrons and therefore fixing individuals to a particular regional school was problematic. For example, Raphael (Sanzio) a native of Urbino, was placed in the Roman School in the 1876 National Gallery catalogue, although his name was associated with the Umbrian School in the catalogues thereafter, but The Ansidei Madonna (NG1171) was placed in the Umbrian Room. 147 The appropriate location for *The Ansidei Madonna* was particularly complicated. For Ruskin and Cook, authors of A Popular Handbook to the National Gallery (1888), the painting belonged to Raphael's Florentine period but marked a point of transition in his painting before his final development on arrival in Rome, and therefore it could be located in any of the three rooms. 148

In 'Picture-Hanging at the National Gallery', Eastlake junior discussed the competing pressures and challenges associated with hanging paintings according to the School to which they belonged (when this could be established). ¹⁴⁹ Firstly, he identified that displaying paintings from the same region or country, but of

different scales in the same room, risked allowing the larger pictures to overwhelm the smaller ones. ¹⁵⁰ Secondly, Eastlake found the variety of the shapes of the paintings (horizontal, upright, square, circular, oblong, or arch-headed) problematic to arrange in a pleasing fashion on the walls. ¹⁵¹ Thirdly, even paintings from the same school displayed a variety of different colour palettes, which threatened to jeopardise their reception. Eastlake wrote: 'A brilliantly and gaily coloured picture hung near one which is painted in a sober key will sometimes take all the life out of the latter... '¹⁵²

'Chromatic discord', as Eastlake junior termed it, posed a particular threat to the 'chefs d'oeuvre' in the collection. ¹⁵³ Finally, Eastlake also had to consider how the masterpieces of the collection - namely the 'Blenheim Raphael (The Ansidei Madonna) [NG1171], Lionardo (sic) da Vinci's 'Vierge aux Rochers' [NG1093] and similar works of high class', could be displayed alongside lesser-known artists. One option that presented itself to Eastlake was to display them in a separate room outside of the arrangement by Schools. 154 This strategy was indebted to Eastlake's knowledge of picture-hanging at other European collections, particularly Dresden where Raphael's Sistine Madonna had been separated from the rest of the collection, as well as the Tribuna at the Uffizi. However, the Keeper concluded that the situation in London was entirely different. He argued, somewhat tendentiously, that foreign collections contained large numbers of mediocre works, which therefore necessitated separating the outstanding paintings for 'separate honour'. By contrast the collections at the National Gallery, albeit relatively small, had only a 'few examples of the Old Masters which do not belong to a high rank in art' even though they might have been by 'lesser known artists'. 155 He concluded that because no painting was of low quality, they could all be hung together. Nonetheless the 'masterpieces', those by Raphael and Leonardo in particular, still needed to be drawn attention to. 156 Indeed, the language Eastlake junior used in the hang plan supports this idea. While artists who were considered canonical were named on the plan, other artists remained anonymous, blanketed under a School, for example 'Sienese'. 157

It can be argued that on many levels the San Giobbe frames responded to Eastlake's picture hanging problems. They created such a substantial environment for the panels they contained that they protected their contents from being affected by other lesser works, while also drawing attention to the masterpieces they contained, as though they were complete in themselves. They also transformed three quite different shaped fragments into identical picture formats, thereby facilitating a more decorous arrangement of works on the wall. However, just as the Taylor extension operated on several levels, not least projecting splendour and intervening in the canon, so too did the San Giobbe frames.

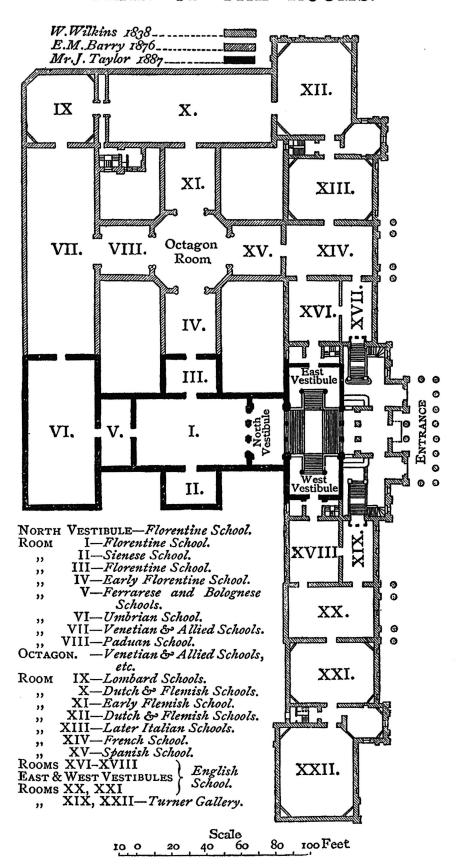
As we have seen, Carol Duncan argued that nineteenth-century art galleries were specially and specifically delineated spaces that can be read as constructed to produce ritual encounters. The ideal ritual progress for Eastlake junior was that, as his visitor passed through a sequence of rooms, he or she would take in an 'uninterrupted' presentation of the progression of Italian art history, viewing the development of 'schools' and the relationships between them, before finally engaging in a meaningful encounter with a masterpiece. 158 To a certain degree, a lack of space thwarted this plan, and less well-represented Schools had to be grouped together. Moreover, visitors would, at least in the case of the first four rooms, start from the 'highest' point of art in Vasarian terms and work backwards, effectively viewing a kind of regression. Beginning in Room 1, which was dedicated to Tuscan pictures from the fifteenth and early part of the sixteenth century, including Leonardo, Michelangelo and Andrea del Sarto, they would then proceed to the second room which contained what Eastlake could not fit in the first room, namely paintings by Botticelli, Fra Filippo Lippi and Uccello. 159 The third room was dedicated to 'archaic examples of Tuscan art' including Margarito d'Arezzo, The Virgin and Child with Scenes from the Lives of the Saints (NG564). In the fourth room, 'precious works' by Fra Angelico were displayed alongside Sienese paintings. Eastlake posited that Lorenzo Costa formed the link between the Ferrarese and Bolognese Schools, which were assigned to the fifth room, alongside paintings by Cosimo Tura, Ercole Grandi, Garofalo, Dosso Dossi, and L'Ortolano,

Francia and Marco Zoppo. 160 In the following room, dedicated to the Umbrian School (which included works by Pinturicchio and Raphael) were also examples from the Venetian and Florentine Schools of the same period. 161 Eastlake maintained that The Ansidei Madonna (NG1171) should occupy a conspicuous position alongside works which had an affinity to the Umbrian School, including the Lamentation over the Dead Christ with Saint Valerian and Saint Mercurialis by Marco Palmezzano (NG596). 162 In Room 7 another canonical painting, Sebastiano del Piombo's The Raising of Lazarus (NGI), was displayed alongside further paintings from the Venetian School, with the exception of the collection of Crivellis which was shown with paintings by Mantegna in Room 8. Paintings from the Parmese, Cremonese, and Milanese Schools were placed in Room 9. 163 When this path is plotted onto the map of the gallery, it becomes evident that the visitor would have to physically double-back on themselves on a number of occasions in order to view all of the paintings in the collection (Fig. 85). The transition from Room 2 (Sienese although, as Cook and Ruskin indicate, it contained Florentine paintings too) to 3 (Tuscan), required returning to Room I (also Tuscan), as did proceeding from Room 4 to Room 5 (Ferrarese and Bolognese). To go from Room 8 (Paduan and Venetian) to 9 (Lombard and Parmese), would require the visitor to go through Room 7 for the second time (Venetian and Brescian). There is an argument that repeating rooms would have allowed visitors to compare Schools and styles and also showed the fluidity between Schools. For example, in their introduction to the Ferrarese School, Cook and Ruskin had described Correggio and Raphael as 'guests' to those cities and this was echoed in the proximity of their work to the Bolognese and Ferrarese room. 164

It appears that despite the compromises within the hang, specialists, or at least Edward Cook and John Ruskin, were able to identify the 'masterpieces' and make connections between them, as Burton and Eastlake hoped visitors would. They celebrated *The Virgin of the Rocks* (NG1093), *The Ansidei Madonna* (NG1171) and *The Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints* (NG1119) because they were by acknowledged masters and were acquired at huge cost. The language used is

85. National Gallery's Floorplan (presentday Level 2) (Cook and Ruskin 1888, p. xxii) National Gallery Archive, London

PLAN OF THE ROOMS.



elevating. For example, Leonardo was described as 'the great master of light and shade' and The Virgin of the Rocks (NG1093) praised because it was characteristic of his 'most perfect' work. ¹⁶⁵ Raphael was celebrated as a 'prince of painters', 166 a phrase that Winckelmann had first coined. 167 The authors described him as a genius with innate gifts that were perfected through training and exposure to the work of other artists (Cook and Ruskin, following Vasari, maintained that Raphael had learnt 'soft beauty of expression' from Leonardo). 168 The authors were also struck by the size and the preservation of *The* Ansidei Madonna (NG1171) and concluded that it had 'all the essentials of great art'. The authors drew the reader's attention to the record price paid for the painting (f,70,000), which was, according to Cook, three times the price ever paid for a picture before and equal to £,14.00 per square inch. Took and Ruskin lauded 'Grandi' (Costa/Maineri) as 'the Raphael of Ferrara', thus aligning him with the better-known master, although this was not acknowledged as such. He was praised as being the author of a 'splendid picture' with 'splendid detail' in the same elevated language used to describe the paintings by Raphael and Leonardo. ¹⁷¹ In these three instances the reader is made aware that they were reading about and looking at great and expensive paintings executed by artists of 'genius', who were connected to one another. In making these connections, it might be argued that Cook and Ruskin were behaving as Burton and Eastlake junior imagined their ideal visitors would and perhaps being influenced by the frames on display. For the less informed visitor, the inscriptions on the frames would point to catalogue entries asserting the same type of information. My observations render the San Giobbe frames an intrinsic piece of apparatus through which the visitor was perceived to understand the aesthetic quality and significance of works of art on display.

SAN GIOBBE FRAMES: POSITIONING FERRARESE PAINTING IN THE RENAISSANCE CANON

Raphael and Leonardo were canonical figures and their work had already found favour in the English collections from which they were sold to the National Gallery. However the absorption of Ferrarese painting in general, and Ercole Grandi specifically, into a generally accepted canon was more challenging. In 1889 E.H. Cook had published an article in *The Contemporary Review* detailing the fluctuating prices of paintings by 'old-masters'. In listing the most expensive paintings acquired by the Gallery, he noticed that 'somewhat less famous masters' cost as much as those of 'great men'. ¹⁷² Ercole Grandi was identified as one such artist. ¹⁷³ Frames and framing might have had an explicit role to play in this debate. In the same article, Cook explained that curators at the South Kensington Museum had decided to display the prices of the paintings on the frame. He wrote:

If the prices of all the pictures were affixed to the frames in the National Gallery as they are at South Kensington, the untutored visitor would indeed marvel at the 'Virgin and Child' of Mantegna costing less than half what was given for 'Samson and Delilah' [also by Mantegna]. ¹⁷⁴

Arguably the San Giobbe frames, rather than the labels attached to them, drew attention to the value of the paintings they surrounded. They did so not simply in terms of cost, but also in their beauty and contribution to the history and development of painting. In the instance of the Costa-Maineri altarpiece, the San Giobbe frame type assisted in confirming the place of Ferrarese painting within the Italian Renaissance canon, by creating an instant visual association with the panels by Raphael and Leonardo.

Jaynie Anderson argues that interest in Ferrarese painting increased with the rediscovery of the Schifanoia frescoes in Ferrara between 1835 and 1840, which at that point were associated with Cosimo Tura. However, the real catalyst for the new appreciation of Ferrarese artists like Tura and Costa in England was knowledge of, and piecemeal sale, of the Ferrarese Costabili collection during the 1850s and 1860s, composed of 'primitive paintings' the majority of which were Ferrarese. The dispersal of the Costabili collection led to the introduction of Ferrarese painting into English collections, notably those of Sir Charles Locke Eastlake, Austen Layard and Sir Ivor Guest. Regardless of the stature of these collectors, Renaissance

Ferrarese painting struggled to occupy an uncontroversial place in wider taste. In 1871 Crowe and Cavalcaselle still described members of the School as not 'first-rates', nor was Ferrarese art 'renowned for its colourists'. 1777

In 1894 an exhibition was organised by the Burlington Fine Arts Club dedicated to the School of Ferrara-Bologna 1450–1540. The organising committee included Adolfo Venturi, Sidney Colvin (Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum), and Edward Poynter (Director of the National Gallery, 1894–1904). The authors made to align Ferrarese paintings and culture with that of Florence, Venice and Rome, in order to negotiate a place for them in the canon. Furthermore, efforts were made to redeem the visual characteristics associated with the Ferrarese School that did not appeal to nineteenth-century eyes, namely linear 'severity' and 'sharpness'. The service of the Burlington of Florence, Venice and Rome, in order to negotiate a place for them in the canon. Furthermore, efforts were made to redeem the visual characteristics associated with the Ferrarese School that did not appeal to nineteenth-century eyes, namely linear 'severity' and 'sharpness'.

In the 'Historical Preface' to the catalogue, Venturi argued that the rule of Leonello d'Este was the turning point in the history of Ferrarese painting because he ignited an interest in Greek antiquity. 180 This response to, and emulation of, the antique bestowed Ferrarese painting with one of the main characteristics of the Renaissance as defined by Jacob Burckhardt. The key artistic figures who were seen as significant in Leonello's rulership and that of later d'Este were Leon Battista Alberti, whom Venturi described as 'the Florentine Vitruvius' (again a reference to the place that had been recognised as the true manifestation of the Renaissance - Florence), Pisanello, Mantegna, Bellini and Roger van der Weyden. 181 According to Venturi these artists, from various artistic centres, rendered Ferrara a 'centre of art'. 182 Benson supported Venturi's arguments in the introduction to the catalogue maintaining, reasonably enough, that Ferrarese artists had been neglected by Vasari, who on account of his Aretine birth and 'academician' taste, had been biased against the school.¹⁸³ He also argued that the geographical location of Ferrara meant that it had been largely ignored by collectors, meaning that artists as 'gifted' and 'original' as those from Umbria, Tuscany and Venice had been ignored in England. 184 Once again this statement put Ferrarese artists on a par with more famous canonical names,

who exemplified the Renaissance as Burckhardt had conceived it.

The National Gallery altarpiece – Lorenzo Costa's *The Madonna* and Child Enthroned with Saints (NG1119), which was then thought to be by Ercole Grandi by Burton, was illustrated with a photograph in the exhibition. Benson described the painting as both attractive and repulsive on account of its 'peculiar' colour scheme and the fact that it had lost its predella, wings and frame, indicating that fragments were not deemed aesthetically pleasing. He also lamented that biographical information about the artist was shrouded in mystery. Indeed, Ercole Grandi's position within the renewed interest in Ferrarese painting in general was particularly problematic and inconsistent, mainly as we shall see because of the errors that Vasari had made concerning his identity.

In A History of Painting of 1871, Crowe and Cavalcaselle clearly distinguished between Ercole Roberti Grandi and Ercole di Giulio, whom Vasari had confused with one another. 187 The former's painting, they argued, had strength and bitterness, while the latter showed 'younger and fresher' blood through his imitation of Perugino.¹⁸⁸ It would seem that the chief interest in Ercole di Giulio lay in the fact that he was considered to be the most interesting pupil of Costa. 189 The close alliance in terms of style between Ercole, Grandi and Costa, led to concerns surrounding the attribution of the National Gallery altarpiece. Crowe and Cavalcaselle had seen The Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints (NG1119) when it was still in the Strozzi collection and attributed it to Costa. ¹⁹⁰Giovanni Morelli (publishing under his pseudonym Ivan Lermolieff) directly challenged Crowe and Cavalcaselle's judgments regarding the authorship of the Strozzi altarpiece, attributing it to Ercole Grandi and, in doing so, bestowing on the artist a new importance. ¹⁹¹ This was a relatively daring pronouncement for the time. Morelli reminds us that the painting came to Strozzi from the Convent of S. Cristoforo degli Esposti, where it had always been believed that it was by Lorenzo Costa. 192 Morelli argued that although there were clear elements derived from Costa, 'it requires a very intimate knowledge of the Ferrarese School to recognise the hand and spirit of the pupil in this work'. ¹⁹³ A footnote alerts readers to the reattribution by the National Gallery of the painting to Ercole Grandi. 194

The San Giobbe frame might have added a border of beauty around *The Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints* which to contemporary eyes was less than perfectly attractive. On a visual level the San Giobbe frame could have encouraged viewers to see the painting as being as important as those by Raphael and Leonardo, and in doing so justified its expense. In so doing, the frame also supported the acquisition of other paintings from the Ferrarese School, which had been acquired throughout the 1850s–1880s. Arguably the San Giobbe frame also disguised any problems relating to authorship, being unapologetically celebratory. The third motivation can be further explored in relation to Leonardo's *The Virgin of the Rocks* (NG1093), which demonstrates that the San Giobbe frames did not simply address the problem of reception in the Ferrarese altarpiece.

Although Leonardo was celebrated as a canonical artist, *The Virgin* of the Rocks was viewed as a problematic painting. In the Art Journal Jean Paul Richter, pupil of Morelli and author of the Literary Works of Leonardo, 1883, debated the authenticity of the National Gallery's version of The Virgin of the Rocks, maintaining it was a 'pretended genuine'. 195 He dismissed critics who had argued that it was 'original' on the basis that they had offered no evidence to support their assertions. 196 Richter described Gian Paolo Lomazzo (who was and is considered an important source for Leonardo studies) as unreliable because he had only moderate critical skills and was blind by the age of thirty-three. 197 Instead, Richter favoured the opinions of both Girolamo Bianconi and Girolamo Luigi Calvi, who had in the early-nineteenth century described the painting as a 'school piece'. 198 Moreover, he argued that if the painting had been genuine the owners would never have sold it in 1777 to Gavin Hamilton for the absurdly cheap price of 30 ducats. ¹⁹⁹ Richter then compared the London and Paris versions of The Virgin of the Rocks. He noted that the flowers in the former were executed with 'indifference' and that the painting lacked 'significant artistic quality in general'.200 Presumably in reply, Burton penned an article entitled 'The Virgin of the Rocks' in 1894, in which he argued that Leonardo had executed the central composition of the altarpiece and that the two side paintings were by Giovanni Ambrogio de Predis (NG1161 and NG1162).²⁰¹ Once again, the San Giobbe frame type seems to have been called upon to confirm the authenticity of an expensive acquisition by a canonical artist. We might conclude from these observations that Renaissance ornament was perceived to have a legitimising function, which was strengthened when the painting and frame were displayed in a beautiful (at least in Aesthetic terms) interior.

Conclusion

It must be acknowledged that the conclusions reached regarding the San Giobbe frames relate largely to how they were intended to function. In reality, they entered a highly compromised environment where they simply could not have had the impact that East-lake junior and Burton might have hoped for. Nevertheless, the San Giobbe frames provide a useful case study, demonstrating that frames and framing were conceived to be able to occupy a major position within the Renaissance palace-style Taylor extension.

Firstly, in the case of the Raphael the San Giobbe frame played a vital role in celebrating the painting, its artist and provenance. If we refer back to the letters of support forwarded to Gladstone from artists such as Leighton, Millais and Alma-Tadema for the acquisition of the Blenheim paintings, we can see that these Aesthetic artists did not only view *The Ansidei Madonna* (NG1171) as 'unique in excellence and beauty', but also as a 'landmark in the history of art'. ²⁰² The San Giobbe frame addressed both of their concerns by surrounding the altarpiece in a 'beautiful' environment, that also marked it out as a culmination point in art history.

Secondly, the San Giobbe frames can be read as intervening in the construction of the 'Italian Renaissance', by supporting the presentation of the canon as it was understood by Eastlake and Burton. This process occurred on a number of levels. The San Giobbe frame, in combination with the architecture of the Taylor extension, clearly identified *The Ansidei Madonna* (NG1171) as a culmination in the development of art history, and yet, by making a visual connection with paintings by Leonardo, also showed that Raphael had emerged from a Florentine and Umbrian painting tradition. The San Giobbe frame type played a central role in facilitating Ercole Grandi's intro-

duction into the canon as it was displayed at the National Gallery. Indeed, the potential resistance to enshrining Ferrarese paintings in the Italian Renaissance canon must, to some extent, have been mitigated by its largest panel being encased in a Venetian version of Tuscan Renaissance carving, executed in nineteenth-century composition. In so doing, the San Giobbe frame played a part in overturning the general assumption that the Renaissance was Florentine and then Roman, the main metanarrative associated with displaying paintings by Schools. It would seem that Renaissance ornament, by now considered beautiful, was imbued with the potential to dissolve controversy and stood for legitimacy. These observations enable one to argue that the San Giobbe frames were designed and developed in response to wider aesthetic debates.

My analysis has shown that the employment of 'Watts' style cassetta frames could not, even on a theoretical level, have achieved the objectives outlined above. The 'Watts' frames were applied to too large a range of paintings, most of which were not Italian late fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century panels, to support claims for the specific development of Italian Renaissance art. Neither could they function as an enfilade, inviting visitors to view pictures from afar. Furthermore, on a structural level, cassetta frames operate differently to tabernacle or all'antica frames. Architectural tabernacle frames create a far stronger boundary and invitation to admire than the non-architectural cassetta frame. Indeed, the San Giobbe frames do, even today, prevent the viewer from examining any other painting. Their size, architectural form and ornament block out the other paintings on display, so that they literally encase what they surround in their own environment and the viewer's eye is drawn relentlessly back into the composition. This is achieved through the combination of the strong blue and gold ornament, which strengthens the most fundamental functions of the frame as a border and the relationships the frames form with the internal framing within the paintings.

The San Giobbe frames are of course problematic. As Renaissance-style frames, they fix the paintings they surround in a Renaissance context, even where it might not be appropriate. *The Madonna of the Rocks* (NG1093) in particular, was never conceived as a single *pala* altarpiece by Leonardo, and we know from archival

evidence that the first or original frame to The Ansidei Madonna (NG1171) was perhaps quite plain, being described as 'con ornamento di legno dorato' in the seventeenth century. 203 We can also apply this conclusion to other Neo-Renaissance frames applied to paintings under Burton's Directorship and Eastlake's Keepership. For example, it was known in the nineteenth century that The Baptism of Christ (NG665) by Piero della Francesca had once been part of a multi-panelled altarpiece arranged in a Gothic framework and that the prominent Graziani family had commissioned wings painted by Matteo di Giovanni and a predella, in a Renaissance design, ²⁰⁴ for it during the 1460s.²⁰⁵ The Neo-Renaissance tabernacle frame surrounding The Baptism of Christ seems inappropriate but indicative of a framing policy which transformed Gothic altarpieces into Renaissance ones (Fig. 112). This tendency might be linked to a desire to harmonise the paintings with the Renaissance-style Gallery interiors. It can be posited that had Gothic frames been chosen for these panels, uncomfortable visual disjunctures between architectural ornament and framing ornament would have been created, destroying the perceived beauty of the interiors. As we saw in the first section, it was vital that the National Gallery demonstrated that they were the natural home for these masterpieces, and visual disjunctures would have been one means of destroying this image.

This chapter, and the two preceding it, have sought to rehabilitate nineteenth-century frames, by showing that they were the result of informed decision making and had a role to play in fulfilling the National Gallery's wider art historical and socio-economic objectives. I will return to these frames in the final chapter when I investigate the status of Victorian frames in the twenty-first-century National Gallery. In Chapter 5 I examine the use of antique frames and copies of them, from the 1880s onwards, highlighting that the desire to bring Renaissance panels into 'the taste of today' was replaced by a new focus on (re)creating lost aesthetic wholeness.



- [1] Bourke, 'Frederic William Burton', 1993, 45.
- [2] Ibid., 46.
- [3] Ibid., 53-54.
- [4] *Ibid.*, 54.
- [5] See Chapter 2 of this thesis.
- [6] Mordaunt Crook, 'Introduction', 1970, 18.
- [7] Boyes, "The Chiefs of Our National Museums', 1891, 121. The drawing can be viewed in the V&A/RIBA Study Room under SKB68/4.
- [8] For example, Wornum disliked the work of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. See Wornum 1850.
- [9] For example, Zorach, 'Renaissance Theory', 2008, 11.
- [10] Mansfield, 'Art History and Modernism', 2002, 11.
- [11] Mansfield, 'Introduction', 2002, 2.
- [12] Findlen, 'Invention of the Renaissance', 2013, 1-34.
- [13] Ibid., 12.
- [14] Ibid., 5. Cited in Bonnard, Gibbon's Journey from Geneva to Rome, 1961, 137.
- [15] Ibid., 12.
- [16] *Ibid.*, 5. Michelet, *Renaissance* ed. 1978, 7, being the seventh volume of his *Histoire de France*, 17 vols, 1833-1863.
- [17] See Chapter 3, 127-8 of this thesis.
- [18] Graham, Inventing van Eyck, 2007.
- [19] See Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis.
- [20] Avery-Quash and Sheldon 2011, 208-210.
- [21] Holmes and Baker, *The Making of the National Gallery*, 1924, 41.
- [22] Martin, The Renaissance, 2003, 5.
- [23] Eastlake, History of the Gothic Revival (1872) 1970, 266. We could contest Eastlake's point by maintaining that the Gothic may still have had associations even though they no longer related to Catholicism.
- [24] Jameson 1842, 13.
- [25] Boyes 1891, 83.
- [26] Ibid., 86.
- [27] Ibid.
- [28] Roeck, Florence 1900, 2009, 126.
- [29] Ibid.
- [30] Ibid., 128.
- [31] Ibid., 131.
- [32] *Ibid*.
- [33] MacCarthy, The Last Pre-Raphaelite, 2011, 298.
- [34] Boyes 1891, 85.
- [35] Mordaunt Crook 1970, 19.
- [36] Eastlake (1872) 1970, 19.
- [37] Snodin and Styles 2004, 87.
- [38] Eastlake, Hints, 1872, 194.
- [39] *Ibid.*, 194. He wrote 'the only proper means of arriving at correct forms in objects of decorative art is to bear in mind the practical purpose'.

- [40] *Ibid.*, 194 195.
- [41] *Ibid*.
- [42] Ibid., 195.
- [43] *Ibid.*, 195 -196.
- [44] Ibid., 195.
- [45] Ibid.
- [46] Benson, Notes on Frames, 1914, 49.
- [47] 'Watts' frames were not only used to re-frame paintings from the British School. Examples applied by, or on behalf of, the National Gallery can still be found surrounding: Probably by Sodoma, Head of Christ (NG1337), Studio of Caspar Netscher, Portrait of a Young Man (NG1332), Liberale da Verona, Dido's Suicide (NG1336) and Josephus Laurentius Dyckmans, The Blind Beggar (NG600).
- [48] Howard, The Architectural History of Venice, 2002, 128-130.
- [49] The painting was acquired in 1882. No panels of an appropriate size were acquired in 1886 and this leads me to believe the inscription was quite simply a mistake and should have read '1882'. The dates inscribed onto frames always referred to the date of acquisition rather than framing.
- [50] See Penny, handwritten note in the frame dossier for NG117: 'The altarpiece frame for the 'Ansidei Madonna' is stamped with a brand for Doman & Sons of 'New Compton St'.. This is not surprising but it is proof that they also made frames for the Leonardo *The Virgin of the Rocks* and for the Costa-Maineri altarpiece which have identical or closely related comp. ornament.
- [51] For Dolman see Appendix 2. His clients included the artist Alma-Tadema.
- [52] NPG: 'British Picture Frame-Makers, 1630-1950' https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/research/programmes/conservation/directory-of-british-framemakers/
- [53] Roberts, 'Nineteenth-Century English Picture Frames', 1985, 156.
- [54] The door fittings are still visible on the frame to Raphael's *The Ansidei Madonna*.
- [55] Cooper and Plazzotta, 'Ansidei altarpiece', 2004, 724.
- [56] Ibid., 725.
- [57] *Ibid.*, 728. See particularly Appendix 5, 731 (Description of the chapel dedicated to St. Nicholas founded by Filippo Ansidei with images of the Baptist preaching and a shipwreck in the predella by the hand of Raphael, text copied c.1726–30. (ASP, Scritture disposte per alfabeto, no. 25, no foliation).
- [58] Ibid
- [59] Syson, Leonardo, 2011, 168.
- [60] NG, Descriptive and Historical Catalogue, 1892, 540.
- [61] *Ibid.* NG1661 is currently attributed to an associate of Leonardo, possibly Francesco Napoletano.

- [62] Anon., 'Passing events', *The Art Journal*, 1898, 256 (bound as one volume).
- There appears to have been no question of incorporating the two side-panels. See NG/1/6: 15 June 1897, it was recorded in the Board Minutes that the National Gallery had been presented with the opportunity to buy two side wings (their term) of Leonardo's *The Virgin of the Rocks* from the Duke Melzi d'Eril's collection in Milan. It was decided that as the panels were not by Leonardo but had formed part of the original altarpiece they should be purchased (for £1000 each).
- [64] NG 1892, 455.
- [65] *Ibid*.
- [66] *Ibid*.
- [67] Cooper and Plazzotta 2004, 728 and footnote 54.
- [68] NG 1892, 210.
- [69] Negro and Roio, *Lorenzo Costa*, 2002, Catalogue entries 33. A (lunette) and 33.b. 107-108.
- [70] Slater and Smith, Architecture, 1888, 1.
- [71] Murray, Handbook for Travellers, 1847, ix.
- [72] Digby Wyatt and Waring, Renaissance Court, 1854, 7.
- [73] *Ibid.*, 8.
- [74] Ibid., 7.
- [75] *Ibid.*, 15.
- [76] Ibid., 17.
- [77] Eglin, Venice Transfigured, 2001, 8.
- [78] Wildenstein, 'Preface' in Sutton, Venezia, 1972, 3.
- [79] Quoted in Harris, Moving Rooms, 2007, 53-54.
- [80] Ibid., 54.
- [81] Ruskin, 'Letter to the Editor', *The Pall Mall Gazette*, March 21, 1872. Cited in Sutton 1972, 12.
- [82] Wornum 1854, 16.
- [83] Ibid., 17.
- [84] *Ibid*.
- [85] Catalogued under V&A: 71:430.
- [86] I have chosen to examine this phenomenon through John Murray as his guidebooks were widely known and used during this period. He also enjoyed friendships with many figures associated with the National Gallery.
- [87] Murray, Handbook for Travellers, 1877, 371.
- [88] Ibid., 371.
- [89] Ibid.
- [90] Murray, Northern Italy, 1853, 334.
- [91] Damien, 'Ruskin vs. Murray', 2010, 19.
- [92] Ibid., 21.
- [93] Ruskin, The Stones of Venice, 1893, 292.
- [94] Venturi, L'architettura, 1924, 536-537.
- [95] MacCarthy 2011, 253.
- [96] Bourke 1993, 54.
- [97] NG68/8/22: National Gallery, 'Papers relating to the Proposed Purchase for the National Gallery of certain

- of the Blenheim Palace Paintings', 1885. Letter dated 23 April 1884.
- [98] Ibid. Letter dated 28 April 1884.
- [99] MacCarthy 2011, 280.
- [100] In his 1843 review of the poem, James Spedding explained that Tennyson had used the term 'Palace of Art' as an allegory, writing, 'The "Palace of Art" represents allegorically the condition of a mind which in the love of beauty and the triumphant consciousness of knowledge and intellectual supremacy, in the intense enjoyment of its own power and glory, has lost sight of its relation to man and to God'. See Spedding, 'Mr. Tennyson's' reviewed 1843, 203–204, quoted in Howell, 'Tennyson's "Palace of Art", 1936, 508–509.
- [101] MacCarthy 2011, 280.
- [102] Denney, 'The Grosvenor Gallery', 1996, 17.
- [103] MacCarthy 2011, 282.
- [104] See NPG: 'British Picture Frame-Makers, 1630-1950'.
- [105] *Ibid.* The source is Dolman's headed paper kept in the National Portrait Gallery records. Duplicate of Accounts, vol. 2, 41.
- [106] Ibid.
- [107] Roberts 1986, 273.
- [108] Mitchell and Roberts, 'Burne-Jones's Picture Frames', 2000, 365.
- [109] *Ibid*.
- [110] Prettejohn, Arts for Art's Sake, 2007, 235.
- [III] Ibid., 238.
- [112] Ibid., 236.
- [113] Saumarez Smith, The National Gallery, 2009, 87.
- [114] Ibia
- [115] Pater, The Renaissance, 1961, 29.
- [116] Ibid., 29.
- [117] Ibid., 27-28.
- [118] NG15/21: Robinson, *The National Gallery*, 1867, 4. Quoted in Whitehead 2005a, 213. As Nicholas Penny has shown there are parallels in terms of ornament between caskets and frames. His frame archive contains a number of examples of this, see the 'related ornament' sections.
- [119] Ibid.
- [120] *Ibid.*, 16. Whitehead has shown in his discussion on architecture and ornament at the National Gallery that throughout the 1870s and 1880s the pursuit of beauty and practical issues relating to security were not easy aims to reconcile with one another.
- [121] See Chapter 2, 71 of this thesis for further discussion of Duncan's work.
- [122] 'Circular to Competing Architects', no. 1, 15 February 1866, 67-68. Quoted in Whitehead 2005a, 207.
- [123] Ibid.

- [124] NG15/21: Robinson, The National Gallery, 1867, 4.
- [125] Whitehead 2005a, 230-231 and Whitehead 2005, 197.
- [126] Anon., 'The National Gallery', 1876, 333-334, 333. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 241.
- [127] Anon., 'The National Gallery', The Architect, 1876a.
- [128] See Chapter 3, 151-2 for a discussion of the Madonna della Rondine frame.
- [129] Anon., 1876a.
- [130] Quoted in Whitehead 2005a, 242.
- [131] Certainly the paintings that the San Giobbe frames surrounded were all acquired after the completion of the Barry Rooms. We know that all three paintings were in the Taylor extension because when Cook and Ruskin published their companion guide to the National Gallery in 1888 they produced a room-by-room guide. NG1093 was recorded as being in Room 1, which is listed on their map as being in the Taylor extension. NG1119 is noted as being in Room 5 again, on the map, this space is delineated as being part of the Taylor extension and NG1171 is mentioned as being in the Umbrian Room (6), again this was part of the Taylor extension. The map which shows this is reproduced as Fig. 85.
- [132] Taylor designed Bow Street Magistrates' Court (1879),additions to Marlborough House (1886) and the WhiteWing of the British Museum.
- [133] NG30/1887/2: Anon., 'National Gallery Extension', The Building News, 1887, 280. See also The National Gallery Report for the Year, 1886.
- [134] Ibid.
- [135] Ibid.
- [136] Eastlake, 'Picture-Hanging at the National Gallery', 1887, 823.
- [137] Anon., 'National Gallery Extension', 1887, 280. See also The National Gallery Report for the Year 1886.
- [138] Ibid.
- [139] For the reception of Raphael in the nineteenth century see, Hugo Chapman, Tom Henry and Carol Plazzotta with contributions from Arnold Nesselrath and Nicholas Penny, Raphael from Urbino to Rome, 2005. In particular see Nicholas Penny, 'Raphael and the Early Victorians', 294-303. In this essay he cites Anna Jameson's revealing quotation that, 'To possess one Raphael is to have one's home converted into a shrine', 295, taken from Jameson, Companion to the most celebrated picture galleries in London, 1844, 83. Penny alerts us to the nineteenth-century idea that edifying paintings should be in public ownership. Penny also reminds us that Passavant's monograph on early Raphael was reviewed in the Quarterly Review in 1840 by Sir Charles Eastlake and that the Prince Consort was also interested in the artist. Cathleen Hoeniger in The Afterlife of Raphael's Paintings, 2011 argues that the

appreciation of Raphael is seen through the restoration of his paintings. She also views copies of Raphael's paintings as a manifestation of the same appreciation. Andreas Henning has discussed how Raphael's paintings became the subject of Aesthetic devotion during the nineteenth century in 'From Sacred to Profane Cult Image: On the Display of Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* in Dresden', while Angela Windholz examines the cult of Raphael in 'Saviour, Prince of Color': The Collection of Raphael Copies in the Orangery at Potsdam (1858)'. Both essays are published in *Sacred Possessions: Collecting Italian Religious Art*, 1500–1900 (eds. Gail Feigenbaum and Sybille Ebert-Schifferer), 2011.

- [140] NG 1892, 452.
- [141] NG15/21: Robinson, The National Gallery, 1867, 17.
- [142] Eastlake, 'The Administration of the National Gallery (a retrospect)', 1903, 936.
- [143] Boyes 1891, 86.
- [144] Eastlake 1887, 820.
- [145] Lepschy, 'Romantic Reassessments', 1983, 79.
- [146] Ibid
- [147] Eastlake 1887, 817.
- [148] Cook and Ruskin, Handbook to the National Gallery, 1888. vol. 1, cat. no. 1171, 108-113.
- [149] Eastlake 1887, 817.
- [150] Ibid., 823.
- [151] Ibid., 826.
- [152] Ibid., 825.
- [153] Ibid., 821.
- [154] Ibid., 822.
- [155] Ibid.
- [156] Ibid., 821. Eastlake also revealed this concern in his Guide to the Louvre, writing 'The ordinary amateur of pictorial art ... often experiences difficulty in selecting out of a large National Collection the pictures most worthy of notice'. Eastlake, Louvre Gallery, 1883, v.
- [157] *Ibid*.
- [158] Ibid., 824.
- [159] Ibid., 822.
- [160] Ibid., 823.
- [161] *Ibid*.
- [162] *Ibid*.
- [163] Ibid., 824.
- [164] Cook and Ruskin 1888, 79.
- [165] Ibid.
- [166] Ibid., 109.
- [167] Burlington Magazine Editorial, 'Raphael seul est divin!', 146, 2004, 719.
- [168] Cook and Ruskin 1888, 188.
- [169] Ibid., 111.
- [170] *Ibid*.

- [171] Ibid., 82.
- [172] Cook, 'Prices', 1889, 720.
- [173] Ibid., 718.
- [174] Ibid., 723.
- [175] Anderson, 'The Rediscovery of Ferrarese Renaissance', 1993, 539.
- [176] *Ibid.* The Costabili collection had been formed by Giovanni Battista Costabili Containi (1756-1841) in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century. His aim was to protect and display the cultural heritage of his city.
- [177] Crowe and Cavalcaselle, A History of Painting, 1871, 514.
- [178] Burlington Fine Arts Club, 'School of Ferrara-Bologna 1450-1540', 1894. Other members of the organising committee included Walter Armstrong, R.H. Benson and Herbert F. Cook.
- [179] Burlington Fine Arts Club 1894, i.
- [180] Ibid., v-ix.
- [181] Ibid., vi.
- [182] Ibid.
- [183] Ibid., xi.
- [184] Ibid., xvi.
- [185] Ibid., xvi.
- [186] Ibid., xxiv.
- [187] The confusion regarding the identification of Ercole Grandi was also discussed in *Handbook of Painting. The Italian Schools*, which was modelled on the handbook by Kugler of 1874. The authors concluded that the name had

- been used interchangeably to refer to Ercole Roberto Grandi and Ercole Giulio Grandi.
- [188] Crowe and Cavalcaselle 1871, 514.
- [189] Ibid., 550.
- [190] Ibid., 546.
- [191] Morelli, Critical Studies of Italian Painters, 1890, 138.
- [192] Ibid., 139.
- [193] Ibid.
- [194] Ibid. The footnote reads 'Since the above was written the picture has been sold, and is now in the English National Gallery (No 1119) where it is rightly ascribed to Ercole Grandi di Giulio Cesare'.
- [195] Richter, 'Leonardo da Vinci', 1894, 167.
- [196] Ibid.
- [197] Ibid.
- [198] Ibid.
- [199] Ibid.
- [200] Ibid., 170.
- [201] Burton, 'The Virgin of the Rocks', 1894, 80. NG1661 is currently attributed to an associate of Leonardo, possibly Francesco Napoletano.
- [202] NG68/8/22: 'Papers relating to the Proposed Purchase for the National Gallery of certain of the Blenheim Palace Paintings'.
- [203] Cooper and Plazzotta 2004, 725.
- [204] Lightbown, Piero della Francesca, 1992, 110.
- [205] Ginzburg, Piero, 1985, 20.





V

Harmony and Wholeness: Old picture frames and the Italian Renaissance at the National Gallery (1890s-1950s)

The Keeper reported that a large number of picture-frames most of which had been lying for many years in one of the ground floor rooms ... and [that] a tender for the value of the frames had been obtained from Messrs Dolman – frame makers to the Gallery.¹

During the 1880s, efforts were made to jettison frames that had, on the instructions of either the Keeper or Director at the National Gallery, been removed from paintings. Although the purchasers of these frames may have disagreed, the comment above, taken from the May 1883 Board Minutes, suggests that the value of these frames to the National Gallery lay in the sums for which they could be sold and not in their worth as functional or historically important objects. The Keeper, Charles Lock Eastlake, left no indication of the types of frames stored in the ground floor rooms. But there is considerable evidence in Board Minutes and Annual Reports to imply that, from 1900 onwards, the Gallery made concerted efforts to replace these frames with antique or antique-looking ones, some of which were used to frame Italian Renaissance art. In this chapter, I examine the causes and consequences of this paradigm shift.

Detail of the Florentine sixteenthcentury frame for Michalangelo's *The Entombement* (see Fig. 127)

As we saw in Chapter 3, the dealer and art historian Otto Mündler (1811-1870) who acted as the National Gallery's Travelling Agent between 1855 and 1857 looked for old frames and suitable models of old frames to copy for paintings in the National Gallery during the 1850s and 1860s. There is also archival evidence to suggest that old frames interested William Boxall, Sir Charles Eastlake's successor. For example, in 1872, Federico Sacchi (1835-1902) who was Boxall's secretary, wrote to inform him that, 'Martegani of Milan has a few most beautiful ancient frames to dispose of', a comment that would have been irrelevant if the Director had no interest in acquiring frames of this nature. Moreover a 'few' might imply that these types of frames were quite scarce. Here it will be demonstrated that the twentieth century remains the crucial period for understanding the function of second-hand frames as a museological tool at the National Gallery. After all, it was only after 1900 that a policy advocating the use of old frames, and copies of them, was formalised at the National Gallery. Prior to this, evidence for the 'new' taste is traceable only in isolated comments across a broad range of archival material.

The origin of the fashion for collecting, adapting and reusing old and antique frames has been attributed to and claimed by a number of individuals. Wilhelm von Bode, Director of the Berlin Gemäldegalerie (1898-1920), was credited by his colleagues in the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum (which became the Bode Museum), notably Frida Schottmüller, with introducing the practice of collecting and reusing antique frames to present and indeed re-present paintings, particularly Italian Renaissance panels. Bode outlined the motivation for what he characterised as his 'innovative' re-framing strategy in an article entitled 'Bilderrahmen in alter und neuer Zeit' published in an 1898 edition of the arts and literary magazine, Pan. He subsequently returned to the subject in 1912, publishing 'Die Ausstattung der Gemälde im Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum mit Alten Rahmen' discussed below. Bode would later claim that the wider taste for Renaissance objects came from Italian dealers, citing the Florentines Stefano Bardini and Elia Volpi, as promoters of this category of art. The aforementioned Robert Benson maintained, in 'Notes on Frames' (1914), that the taste developed

amongst private collectors, notably the Anglo-Australian George Salting and Italian dealers, shortly before the turn of the century. He claimed that Italian dealers employed old frames in the belief that it would increase the value of the paintings they were offering for sale, although I would argue that their motivations were more complex than simply financial gain.

The topic has also been addressed in the secondary museological literature. Former curator of the Louvre, Germain Bazin, attributed the fashion for old frames to the influence of decorative art museums, specifically the Swiss National Museum in Zurich, which was established at the end of the nineteenth century. Bazin argues that in this environment old frames were employed to create a sense of total 'ambience'. The primary sources support this claim. As early as 1897 the Venetian dealer, Michelangelo Guggenheim, would argue that the decorative arts museums in London, Berlin and Vienna had realised the importance of collecting antique frames for the benefit of artists, decorators and industrial manufacturers. 9

Nor should we forget that artists, ranging from the Italian *Macchiaioli* painters in Italy to John Singer Sargent (1856–1925) in Britain, chose to frame their own paintings in old frames. It is revealing that Sargent counted Robert Benson as one of his patrons as the National Gallery Trustee certainly argued for their introduction at the National Gallery. ¹⁰ Clearly, then, the taste for old frames was fairly widespread amongst an interconnected group of individuals. But the fundamental question remains how and why museum officials responded to this vogue?

While Florentine dealers might have introduced the fashion for old frames, it was Bode who made their use museological and art historical. The fact that Bode pursued the policy in a major international museum meant that his re-framing practices, albeit compromised, were on display permanently during a period in which the Berlin museums were particularly in the public gaze. Indeed they were discussed in the international press, owing to the sheer number of acquisitions that were being made and the innovative ways in which they were displayed. ¹¹

In what follows I shall examine firstly on a general level how the taste for old frames emerged, looking specifically at its dissemination through a nexus of Italian dealers, collectors and museological institutions (namely the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum). I will then explore how experimentation with old frames in these overlapping spheres, over a sixty-year period, affected re-framing practice at the National Gallery. In particular, I will focus on the use that Trustees, Directors and Keepers made of Bode's re-framing model, especially the arguments he used to explain his decisions. A notable difference between Berlin and London was that whereas Bode pioneered the reuse of antique frames within ambient rooms, old frames were deployed at the National Gallery largely independently of old furniture. 12 I also seek to show that although successive generations of National Gallery Directors adopted the same approach to re-framing, they were motivated by different considerations from their continental counterparts and by different desired outcomes. This is made clear by their writings on the subject and in related areas, such as conservation and display. In particular I will focus on how old frames were initially used as art historical tools, confirming the date and origin of the painting, before becoming one means of creating an aesthetic experience for the Gallery visitor and indeed I highlight that they were frequently used to do both – historio-aesthetics.

By focusing on the written arguments supporting the use of old frames, I rethink a period in framing history at the National Gallery that has seemingly been judged on the basis of historic photographs of its interiors, photographs that frame-out the Gallery's interest in old frames that is so evident in other archival material. An example taken in 1923 of the octagon of the Barry Rooms (Fig. 86) shows *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and Other Saints* by Francesco Francia (NG179 and 180), Marco Basaiti's *The Virgin and Child* (NG2499) and *The Ansidei Madonna* by Raphael (NG1171). All of the paintings are surrounded by Neo-Renaissance nineteenth-century frames which had been applied between 1850 and 1880.

Investigation into the administrative processes that facilitated the introduction of old frames helps to forward our understanding of the nature of this taste and how it was formed and disseminated at the National Gallery. In previous chapters I demonstrated that Directors, Keepers, powerful Trustees and government figures



shaped National Gallery policy and directly affected framing and re-framing. ¹³ Here, I divide a sixty year period into three subsidiary periods determined by the length of specific Directorships, because evidence in the National Gallery Board Minutes clearly shows that these men, in conjunction with interested Trustees, and tempered by government interference, directly influenced re-framing decisions at this time. The periods are:

1. 1900 to 1920, examining how the issue was addressed under the Directorship of Sir Charles Holroyd (1906–1916) in light of the re-framing legacy inherited from Sir Edward Poynter (1894 to 1904);

86. View of the Barry Rooms (present-day Galleries 36-38) in 1923. National Gallery Archives, London

- 2. The 1920s and 1930s during the Directorships of Sir Charles Holmes (1916–1928) Sir Augustus Moore Daniel (1929–1933) and Sir Kenneth Clark (1934–1945);
- The post-war development of the National Gallery under the Directorship of Sir Philip Hendy (1946-1967).

Actual re-framing can be examined and enriched through the lens of the philosophical readings of framing that were being pioneered in the first half of the twentieth century and which were examined in the first chapter. 14 Indeed the historical period examined here overlaps with the publication of seminal texts on the subject of framing, prior to Derrida's total reconceptualisation of the issue through his elision of the ergon with the parergon. These texts included, but were by no means restricted to, Simmel's 'The Picture Frame: An Aesthetic Study' (1902), José Ortega y Gasset's 'Thoughts on Art and Philosophy' (1921) and the comments Max Friedländer made on frames and framing in Von Kunst und Kennerschaft (On Art and Connoisseurship), which was first published in English in 1942. Exploring actual and conceptual framing alongside one another highlights the fact that the theoretical and practical were mutually informative, sometimes directly, as is the case with Friedländer's analysis of the subject and the decisions on re-framing he took in Berlin.

THE TASTE FOR OLD THINGS: REJECTING THE REVIVALIST AESTHETIC

Seeking out and adapting antique frames was not an invention of circa 1900, although contemporaries characterised it as one; indeed, Wilhelm von Bode described it as a 'modern' phenomenon. Nor did it emerge in isolation, but must be viewed as part of a more general taste for old things, the origins of which have been the subject of scholarly debate. As we saw in the fourth chapter, antique furnishings were not only collected and displayed, but also modified and transformed into new objects. In British

architecture, as John Harris shows, old materials had been routinely reused since the early nineteenth century. ¹⁶ Nicholas Penny maintains that the burgeoning interest in 'authentic specimens' in furnishing, a category that must encompass old frames (and copies of them), was stimulated by the revivalist aesthetic, predominantly Neo-Renaissance, Neo-Greek, Neo-Baroque and Neo-Rococo styles, which dominated European taste from the mid-nineteenth century. ¹⁷ In *Authentic Décor*, Peter Thornton maintains that 'antiques' only came into general vogue during the 1870s, when as a taste it expanded from the preserve of a small section of society to a broader public. He cites as evidence the opinion of the American author, art critic and Ruskinian, Clarence Cook (1828–1900), who wrote in 1881: 'a fashion, that has been for twenty years working its way down from a circle of rich, cultivated people, to a wider circle of people'. ¹⁸

Cook's interest in 'antiques' and what might be termed (problematically) popular taste, was reflected in the sudden increase of affordable guides to collecting old furniture, such as Frank Frankfort Moore's *The Commonsense Collector* (1910). ¹⁹ The British furniture historian and former Director of Leeds City Art Galleries, Christopher Gilbert, argued for an even later date, maintaining that it was only during the mid-1920s that antique furniture began to be collected by a larger public, although he suggests that these collectors made few distinctions between genuinely old objects and copies of them. ²⁰ Prior to this date Gilbert maintains that the fashion was for 'flamboyant continental decorative art and exact reproductions of well-known French masterpieces', presumably of the type that Wornum lamented seeing at the 1851 Great Exhibition. His lament was indicative of the entrenchment of such a taste, if, at the minimum, it lasted some seventy years. ²¹

Reusing and adapting old frames was manifestly part of a new attitude towards antique furniture that transcended socio-economic classifications. The principles behind the widespread and relatively new interest in antiques, outside the sphere of collectors, were analysed by the Austrian art historian and formalist Alois Riegl (1858–1905) in 'The Modern Cult of Monuments' (1903). Riegl, who began his career in the Museum of Applied Arts,

Vienna, ²² replaced the traditional classification of monuments according to artistic or historical importance with a new set of values, which he claimed were applied to them by the modern beholder. ²³ From the perspective of this chapter, Riegl's concept of age value, by which he meant the appeal and the caché of imperfect, incomplete and decaying objects, is the most illuminating of his aesthetic constructions. Crucially, he claimed that age value affected the modern beholder because it directly addressed their emotions. ²⁴ The modern aesthetic appreciation of decay caused Riegl to argue that conservation would disturb the emotional resonance of the object. ²⁵ The art theorist and Riegl specialist Margaret Iversen maintains that the new appreciation of visible age in the later nineteenth century had a transformative impact on the appearance of old objects, ending the practice of removing any signs of their decay. ²⁶

But the motivation, certainly for museums, was more complex. Iversen's conclusions can be challenged or at least nuanced with reference to Friedländer's interrogation of attitudes towards conservation. Writing in On Art and Connoisseurship, Friedländer described two types of restoration. The first was preservation, which he termed a 'necessary evil', the purpose of which was to prevent further decay of the picture surface by stabilising pigments or restoring its integrity by removing later retouches and varnish layers.²⁷ More problematic for Friedländer were the restorers who tried to return the object to its original condition.²⁸ Friedländer attributed this taste to a combination of wanting to 'see what the artist saw, directly after he carried out his creative purpose'29 and to collectors, dealers and restorers who colluded to increase the value of artworks by presenting them in what appeared to be original condition. He maintained that this was an impossible goal. A restorer, argued Friedländer, was so time-bound that his interventions could never convey 'the true style, expression and character of the old master' and therefore what he produced or attempted to reproduce was tantamount to forgery. 30 Whatever the justice of this critique, it suggests visible signs of aging in paintings were not always valued.

Although reusing antique frames was inextricably linked to both

the new taste for old things and to a desire to present Italian Renaissance panels in a way that the artist might have recognised, it fundamentally engaged with contemporary museological concerns and anxieties. In the nineteenth century, Neo-Renaissance frames effectively (but not always intentionally), pulled decontextualised panels into the contemporary aesthetic context emphasising rupture and confirming their legitimate position in an English art gallery. By contrast I would argue that second-hand frames were used in Berlin and London in an attempt to recreate the lost wholeness between the painting and frame and to minimise the appearance of the indisputable fracture that had occurred to allow the work to enter the Gallery. Simultaneously these frames rendered their contents a manifestation of a particular (artistic) 'style'. The term style has been deemed problematic because, as Frederic Schwartz in 'Cathedrals and Shoes' declares, 'style' is 'not adequate to our thinking about visual form and representation today', and is in fact a 'terminal case'.³¹

Despite Schwartz's comments, it is vital to acknowledge that by the late-nineteenth century, the term 'the Renaissance' was widely accepted as a stylistic concept which curators such as Bode sought to show in their museum displays. In 1888 for example, Heinrich Wölfflin published Renaissance and Baroque, which established the stylistic characteristics of these terms, and introduced sub-categories of style, including 'Early Renaissance' and 'High Renaissance'. 32 The publications I discuss in the following paragraphs demonstrate that frames, particularly Italian Renaissance examples, had become the subjects of stylistic histories and analysis. The corpus of knowledge that this literature generated was put into practice at the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum when frames of the same date and origin were sought for panels without frames or those surrounded by frames that were deemed unsuitable. Re-framing in this manner was deemed to be one means of conveying the 'Renaissance' style to museum visitors.



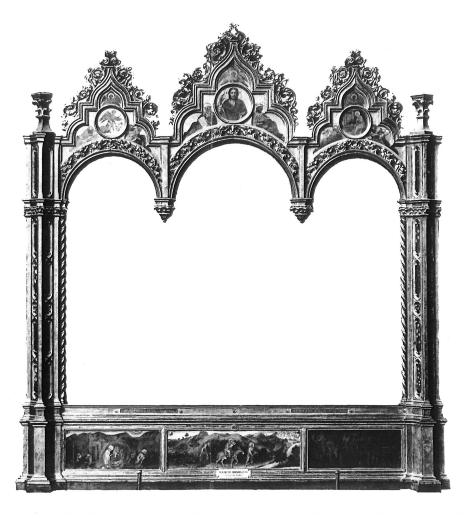
OLD FRAMES ON A EUROPEAN LEVEL

Robert Benson introduced 'Notes on Frames', published as an appendix to the Curzon Enquiry, thus: 'The question of appropriate frames, contemporary in design, and gilt in the style of the period and school to which a picture belongs, has been gradually forcing its way to the front'.³³

Benson's description of an appropriate frame as one that was contemporary in design to the painting it was selected to surround, highlights his awareness of historical frame styles. But how, where and, indeed, when did frames become the subject of stylistic history? And when did the importance of belonging — or, as it was more commonly referred to at the time, 'wholeness' — emerge as such an important condition of appropriateness that re–framing policies were built on the concept?

Hitherto, Michelangelo Guggenheim's *Le cornici* (1897) has been characterised in the secondary literature as the seminal text in the formation of a stylistic history of Renaissance and Gothic picture frames. To reiterate, Guggenheim was a leading art and antiques dealer in Venice, selling his goods to a number of museums and private collections.³⁴ In the introduction to *Le cornici* he argued that museums, academies and public collections had paid insufficient attention to the relationship between the painting and the frame. Guggenheim maintained that as a consequence of this indifference, new and 'ugly' frames surrounded 'splendid' Renaissance paintings. For the Venetian antiquarian, these re-framing practices threatened to rupture any sense of wholeness and, consequently, the sense of completion of the object.³⁵

Guggenheim implied that rupture could be halted by recreating a stylistic continuum between the painting and its frame. This argument was justified by his observation that different periods in frame-making had distinct physical qualities. Frames known to have come from Stefano Bardini, alongside some from the South Kensington Museum, the Church of San Giobbe and his personal collection, provided Guggenheim with sufficient material to illustrate the main types of Italian Renaissance frame: 'all'antica', 'cassetta' and 'Sansovino' profiles, although he did not use these terms, preferring



87. Original frame of Gentile da Fabriano's

Adoration of the Magi (see Figs 50 and
110) (Guggenheim 1897, plate 2)

to caption them in his book according to origin and date (indicating also that frame nomenclature had not yet been established) (Fig. 87). Guggenheim intended collectors and museum officials to select frames illustrated in *Le cornice* that were of a similar date and from the same region as the paintings that required re-framing, and to commission newly made copies of them.³⁶ It is revealing that despite the nascent interest in antique frames, Guggenheim did not recommend that his clientele acquire them, nor did he show any interest in the surfaces of 'original' frames. I will show, as indeed the provenance of his frame examples also demonstrates, that *Le cornici* was one element of a more general, overlapping and layered interest in identifying and cataloguing frame types, and part of a wider project to re-frame in a way that ensured a stylistic whole was (re) created between the frame and the painting.

A limited number of late-nineteenth-century and early-twenti-

 Sandro Botticelli, Madonna of the Pomegranate, about 1487, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (original fifteenthcentury frame)



eth-century art historians focused their attention largely on frames they believed to be original to the painting they were discussing, or at least those that seemed visibly connected. The contrasting and yet complementary methods these art historians used to discern whether a frame was original to the painting, can be seen in the writings of Herbert Horne (1864-1916) and Wilhelm von Bode on Sandro Botticelli. In his Botticelli monograph of 1908, Horne used archival references to identify original frames. For example, the account book of Giovanni d'Agnolo de' Bardi held in the private archives of Count Francesco Guicciardini in Florence enabled Horne to identify Giuliano da Sangallo as the maker of the frame for The Virgin and Child with Saints. John the Evangelist and John the Baptist (the Altarpiece of Santo Spirito, Berlin Gallery). 37 Similarly the inventory of Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici (1675) confirmed that the tondo frame ornamented with fleur-de-lis diaper was original to the Madonna of the Pomegranate (Uffizi, Florence) (Fig. 88).³⁸

Bode published his monograph on Botticelli some fifteen years after Horne, in 1925. Whereas Horne had discussed 'original' frames



 Sandro Botticelli, Madonna in Glory with Seraphim (Madonna on Clouds), about 1469-70, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (original fifteenth-century frame)

in relation to primary sources, Bode looked for evidence of a deliberate visual, mainly stylistic, dialogue between the frame and the painting in order to identify whether it was original or not. For example, Bode claimed that the 'rich', 'Renaissance'-style frame around Botticelli's *Madonna on Clouds* (Uffizi, Florence) (Fig. 89)

was original to the picture because the 'simple and vigorous lines' of the frame worked in 'exquisite harmony' with the enclosed figures in the painting.³⁹ Furthermore, for Bode, the richness of the gilding and the unusual ornament on the frame blended with the gold on the garments, haloes, and cloud, creating a delicate tonal effect that was 'quite peculiar to Botticelli', and was therefore, to his mind, beyond doubt, original to the painting.⁴⁰ The intimate connection between the picture and the frame was also evident to Bode in *The Virgin offering a Pomegranate to Christ* (Uffizi, Florence). For Bode, the columns in the painting with somewhat 'Gothic' composite capitals were consciously designed to function in relation to the Gothic frame, which he believed would have been hung within a Gothic church. 41 The evidence cited above, most notably the 'outline' and colour of the frames, led Bode to conclude that Botticelli must have designed the frames for his paintings, rendering them as evidence to demonstrate how the artist wanted his paintings to be presented.⁴² Unlike Horne, Bode also considered the original appearance of the surface of the frame when he searched for the relationships between original frames and the paintings they contained. In the instance of the Madonna and Child with Angels in the Palazzo Corsini in Florence he noted that, although the frame was original, re-gilding had destroyed the relationship between the frame and painting. 43 Although their methods were different, both Horne and Bode noticed that frames and paintings, when they formed what they perceived to be a complete whole, significantly set them apart from their wider setting, with the exception of their first or original environment. In this chapter I will show that Bode's art historical understanding of Renaissance framing fundamentally informed what he tried to achieve in practice.

The analysis above compels us to consider how stylistic histories of picture frames developed in the period under consideration here. In the subsequent discussion I refer repeatedly to Bode's colleagues and protégés at the Berlin museums: Frida Schottmüller (1872–1936) and Max Friedländer (1867–1958). Schottmüller was a historian of Renaissance art and a curator. Having obtained her doctorate under Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945) she took up a post in the Italian Renaissance division of the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum (which was

renamed the Bode Museum in 1956), working under Bode, where she helped to develop a series of rooms which recalled the appearance of Renaissance interiors as they were imagined to have looked at the time. Has Friedländer was a scholar of Netherlandish art and a fierce critic of Giovanni Morelli's 'scientific' methods. He joined the staff of the Gemäldegalerie in 1896, becoming Deputy Director in 1904 and succeeding Bode as Director in 1924. Archival evidence held in Berlin demonstrates that it was Friedländer who authorised many of the frame acquisitions made by Bode. These brief biographies are suggestive of the intimate connection between Berlin museology and Wölfflin's attempt to identify and isolate the stylistic characteristics shared by all artworks produced during the same period. He

During the late nineteenth century, there was a renewed interest in the decorative arts as manifestations of style. Burckhardt maintained that the rebirth of the individual genius, the hallmark of the Renaissance, had not only been manifest in masterpieces, but permeated all areas of life from civic order to handicrafts.⁴⁷ Similarly, Wölfflin wrote that the 'the pulse of an era' could be felt 'in the minor decorative arts'. 48 Neither was this interest purely academic. In Die italienischen Hausmöbel der Renaissance (1920) (Italian Renaissance Furniture, 1921) Bode observed that museums and galleries were collecting Italian Renaissance furniture, architects and decorators were furnishing houses with it, and studying it had become a central part of the curriculum of industrial art schools. 49 Bode attributed the origins of this new taste to specific Italian dealers, Elia Volpi, who had purchased and furnished the Palazzo Davanzati in Florence⁵⁰, Stefano Bardini and Luigi Grassi. ⁵¹ Clearly there was an important connection between scholarship, the art market and, in the case of Volpi and Bardini, display, which was of particular relevance to re-framing using antique frames. Knowledge of old frames was the result of detailed art historical scholarship, whereas their display was driven by both art historical and aesthetic concerns, depending on when they were acquired, as well as the requirements of the institution that had acquired them.

Bode intended his book to have a practical impact on how Italian Renaissance furniture was displayed. This agenda was inex-

tricably linked to his assertion that there was an appropriate way of displaying Italian mobiliary art, which he claimed had been hitherto unexplored. 52 In particular, he wanted his readers to emulate in their practice the harmony he claimed had existed in Italian Renaissance rooms. 53 Bode claimed that (re)creating this harmony relied upon being able to categorise Italian Renaissance decorative art and furniture by region and date, a system which was based on his belief that there were observable stylistic characteristics associated with geographical areas.⁵⁴ Remarkably, Bode's investigations in Italian Renaissance Furniture did not extend to picture frames. Indeed it was Frida Schottmüller in Die italienischen Möbel und dekorativen Bildwerke im Kaiser Friedrich Museum (1922) who began to catalogue the date, place of origin, details of ornament of frames in the collection and, where appropriate, whether they were original to the painting ('ursprünglich nicht dazu gehörig'). 55 Schottmüller's categorisation of frames specifically, and furniture in general, according to region and date, was closely linked to Bode's identification of regional stylistic characteristics in Italian Renaissance Furniture. 56 Decorative arts museums sought to exhibit style in its totality, to the extent of recreating historical interiors. The comments made in relation to frames and framing in Die Kunst im Hause (1871) (Art in the House, 1879) written by Jacob von Falke, the vice-director of the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry in Vienna (1864-1895), aid our understanding of the plurality of roles that frames were thought to have played in the Renaissance domestic interior by nineteenth-century museum curators. The major theme in both Falke's writings and those of his contemporaries in terms of reimaging the Renaissance home was an emphatic stress on harmony. Indeed, the central aim of Art in the House was to identify what made historical interiors beautiful and thereby give pleasure through harmony.⁵⁷ Falke perceived Renaissance interiors, particularly Venetian examples, as 'generally harmonious and comfortable' with a 'rich and artistic aspect'. 58 Falke's understanding of the function of frames was fundamentally informed by how he imagined these interiors during the Renaissance to have looked. According to Falke, the walls of 'handsome' houses would have been covered in wood

panelling, textiles, Gobelin tapestries and gilded leather, much as Bode imagined them in his aforementioned article on frames of 1912. ⁵⁹ Falke claimed that the easel paintings in these rooms were conceived by their painters without consideration of the environment they would become part of, and therefore had to be judged without reference to their surroundings (which they nonetheless harmonised with). 60 He argued that the 'carved, gilded, blue, or red' frames that surrounded sixteenth-century panels were a crucial aspect of maintaining this independence. 61 Indeed, for Falke, frames were an especially important element of sixteenth-century interior design because the brightness of gilded leather and brocaded fabric threatened to 'extinguish[ed] the pictures hung upon them', rendering the frame a protective device. 62 It is noteworthy that brocades were rather more associated with the Venetian casa, highlighting the importance of Venice in these reconstructed interiors. 63 Falke's comments help to explain why frames and the paintings they surrounded were considered both independently of their settings and in conjunction with them by historians and museum curators at the end of the nineteenth century. I would argue that this conceptualisation of frames complicated the tasks assigned to them in the museum environment, as a comparison with their display in the art market reveals.

OLD FRAMES: THE ART MARKET AND THE MUSEUM

The Bardini scholar Valerie Niemeyer Chini argues in her analysis of the relationship between Stefano Bardini and Bode, that a Bardini style of taste and display was exported from the art market to museums and art galleries in London, Berlin and America during the period under discussion here. Between 1880 and 1883 Bardini established his own shop in the deconsecrated thirteenth-century church of San Gregorio della Pace (1273–1279) in Florence. Within the church's interiors, Bardini arranged paintings alongside examples of old and reproduction 'minor arts', including statues, columns, capitals, Gothic tabernacles, fifteenth-century doorways and *cassoni* and offered them





90. Interior of Museo Bardini, Florence, before 1918 (Fahy 2000, plate 2, p. 353)

91. Interior of Museo Bardini, Florence

for sale (Fig. 90).66 According to art historian Marilena Mosco the display was typical of nineteenth-century experimental displays which took place within Gothic and Renaissance church interiors. ⁶⁷Of intrinsic interest to my thesis are the empty frames that Bardini displayed against a blue wall (named 'Bardini blue'), an approach which was not only novel but highlights the dealer's acknowledgment that they were decorative arts objects in their own right (Fig. 91). In her discussion of Bardini's Italian frames, Mosco discusses ten empty frames in Bardini's collection (empty also in Bode's time) as being indicative of his taste, many of them being purchased from aristocratic Florentine families such as the Strozzi. All of the frames Mosco illustrates are of high quality in terms of their carving and gilding and exemplify a specific frame type. ⁶⁸ But Bardini did not restrict himself to selling only empty frames. Photographs in Bardini's archive provide us with a means of examining how these frames were displayed and used. 69 It would appear that Bardini consciously adapted old frames for paintings of a similar period, but did not consider whether they were appropriate for the subject matter that they enclosed. This suggests that his choices were primarily governed by what he felt would complement the painting aesthetically rather than by proto-scientific principles. For example a depiction of Saint Jerome by an anonymous Lombard painter (circa 1500) is framed in a tabernacle frame inscribed on the entablature 'SANCTA.MARIA/DA







92. Lombard School, *Saint Jerome*, about 1500 (Fahy 2000, cat. no. 29)

- After Raphael, Madonna and Child, location unknown (Fahy 2000, cat. no. 438)
- Lippo d'Andrea, Madonna and Child, location unknown (Fahy 2000, cat. no. 280)

BRESANOR' (Fig. 92). The frame was clearly made for a depiction of the Virgin Mary and the inscription apparently refers to the church at Castelleone, near Cremona. 70 Nevertheless, the Italian sixteenth-century frame effectively contains the image and heightens the sense of perspective in the composition. Bardini also placed a copy of a Raphael painting of the Madonna and Child (Fig. 93) in a Sansovino frame, which is too late for the painting, being late-sixteenth century (although it might have once framed a religious image).⁷¹ These framing decisions might highlight that there were quite simply not enough appropriately sized frames to draw on. This hypothesis is supported by instances of the unusual practice of double framing. For example, a picture by Lippo d'Andrea of Madonna with Child and Saints is shown surrounded by a carved Gothic arch that has, in turn, been inserted into a larger 'Renaissance' tabernacle frame (Fig. 94).⁷² The florid carving on both the Gothic arch and the capitals of the tabernacle seems to have been used to unite the two frames on a visual level.

It will become evident that Bardini exerted an enormous influence on Bode's re-framing strategies. However, as I have already stated, Bode's innovation lay in the fact that he used antique frames as museological tools in a museum, an environment which redefined how frames and framing were conceptualised. In the preface to Katalog der Ausstellung 'Antike Rahmen' im Künstlerhaus

(1929) Hermann Voss (1884-1969) maintained that although this exhibition, which was held in Paris and Berlin, had occurred after Bode's death, he had been instrumental in its organisation. Voss claimed that until Bode had begun using 'appropriate' frames, that is, ones of the same style and period as the painting to re-frame a picture at the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum, art enthusiasts and collectors (and perhaps his counterparts in the museum world) had been largely indifferent to historical framing styles. They had unquestionably resorted to what Voss and Bode viewed as mass-produced frames, or weak copies of them, to re-frame their historical paintings. According to Voss, the results of Bode's framing policy within the public domain were deemed so aesthetically striking by private collectors that they emulated his example.⁷³ But why were these frames considered so aesthetically different to gallery and revival-style frames by Bode's contemporaries? The nature of this shift in taste can be examined through the comments made in regard to frames and framing by Bode and his circle in relation to the need for a new re-framing policy.

Bode maintained that copies of old frames had proved insufficient for his purposes in Berlin. In 'Die Ausstattung der Gemälde' he narrated how he had initially modelled his re-framing strategy on the National Gallery's specially-commissioned tabernacle frames which had been used to frame its large sixteenth-century altarpieces, although he admitted that he found the Gallery's choice of models and the indifferent quality of their execution disappointing.⁷⁴ Bode reported that, in general, the copies of old frames failed to convey in terms of both carving and gilding the true 'spirit' of the models on which they were based. 75 Bode's emphasis on the spirit of the original frame conditioned his approach to the existing Gallery frames in Berlin, particularly the Schinkelrahmen that had hitherto been favoured. In her report of the same name, Schottmüller narrated how the Prussian architect, painter and designer, Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841) had, in about 1827, on the instructions of Gustav Waagen and Wilhelm von Humbolt, designed a series of repeat pattern composition frames with what she noted as cheap zinc palmette corners for the Berlin Gemäldegalerie.⁷⁶ The example illustrated here surrounds *The*



 Francesco Mainardi, Madonna and Child, about 1500, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (Schinkel frame)

Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist and Three Angels by Sebastiano Mainardi (Fig. 95).

The comparisons that Bode and his contemporaries drew between their re-framing policies and the earlier ones of Schinkel reveal the extent to which old (perceived as original) frames and modern Gallery versions were conceptualised differently. The first point of difference Bode discerned between himself and Schinkel was their contrasting attitudes to original frames. Where Bode sought to find and celebrate old frames, he maintained that although Schinkel did not remove original frames in his 'frame fury', he disguised them by re-gilding or hiding them inside a larger Schinkelrahmen.⁷⁷ Friedländer criticised Schinkelrahmen because he viewed them as attempting to assimilate the contents of the museum with its architecture rather than viewing the painting and frame as a whole set within these interiors.⁷⁸ For Friedländer this approach was an extension of how eighteenth-century frames were used as a 'bridge' connecting furniture, wall decoration and architectural interiors, all of which were executed in the same style.⁷⁹

A greater understanding of Friedländer's stance can be gained with reference to his essay on composition. He argued that the function of the frame was to enclose and isolate the work of art from the external world, not to link it to furniture and the rest of the interior. For Friedländer, gilding heightened this role because gold made no reference to reality. Therefore, according to Friedländer, the application of gold to the frame surface was useful because the process further removed the painting from the objects surrounding it. 80 This observation corresponded with Schottmüller's argument that gallery-style frames became redundant as soon as paintings were viewed as images in the museum and not as part of the decoration of the room. Although she does not give a date for this shift, my observations in Chapter I show that this occurred around the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁸¹ Having examined the theoretical arguments concerning the changing role of frames, I will now examine what occurred in practice in Berlin before exploring how Bode's approach to re-framing was used and adapted at the National Gallery.

BODE AND THE KAISER-FRIEDRICH MUSEUM: ESTABLISHING A PLACE FOR OLD FRAMES

It has been asserted that Bode's aim was to establish Berlin as one of the world's leading cities for museums, rivalling London and Paris and thus increasing the prestige of the imperial capital. Bode worked closely with the German royal family and wealthy private collectors (some of whom paid an annual fee of 500 marks to join the prestigious *Verein für Kunstwissenschaft*) to secure financial support for his museum projects. On gaining the patronage of the Crown Prince Frederick, Bode set about transforming the Berlin museums into institutions worthy of the title National, particularly by collecting and displaying what he felt were the best examples of the Italian School, especially from the Renaissance period. The outstanding quality of this collection required correspondingly high-status framing.

Bilsel has argued recently that the implementation and practice

of 'new museology' or Kunstwissenschaft can be seen in the Berlin Museums. He maintains (ignoring the information provided in guidebooks) that the new museological approach to curating and display emerged from late-nineteenth-century rejections of the scholarly museum⁸⁵ in favour of creating a 'non-pedantic living museum' which focused on the unique essence or authenticity of the work of art. 86 These ideas found expression in the Renaissance Rooms at the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum, which have been cast as an attempt to erode traditional museological subject barriers by bringing sculpture, painting and applied art closer together. The aim was to gain a better understanding of the wider notion of the culture and style and specifically how the characteristics of the Renaissance permeated all objects. 87 Their arrangements, combined with the fact that the primary task remained to exhibit paintings, meant that antique picture frames had to perform a number of complex, and apparently contradictory roles, connecting and yet separating the paintings from the decorative arts. It is only by reconstructing how these interiors were presented that the roles assigned to antique frames becomes clear.

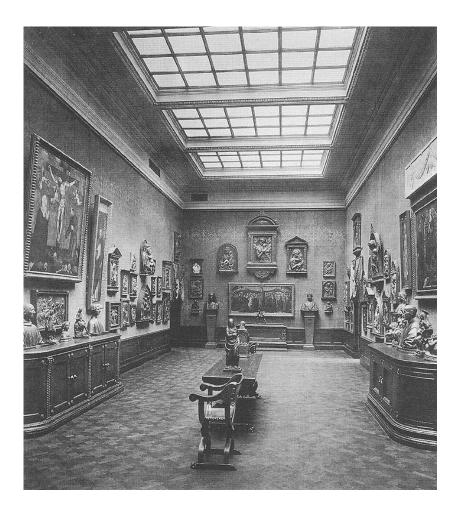
The Kaiser-Friedrich Museum (1904) was designed by Ernst Eberhard von Ihne in a style which synthesised German Baroque architecture with that of the Italian Renaissance. 88 At the heart of the museum was a basilica, the interior of which was based on the late-fifteenth-century church of San Salvatore al Monte in Florence (Fig. 96). 89 Within this space, altarpieces by Vivarini, Francia, Fra Bartolommeo and Paris Bordone were placed in wall niches that recreated, to some extent, how they might have been positioned in an Italian Renaissance chapel. 90 In an article for the Fortnightly Review (1912), Bode described the appearance and rationale for the displays that lay beyond the central basilica (Fig. 97). The Renaissance works by Botticelli, Fra Filippo Lippi, and sculptures by Donatello and Desiderio da Settignano among others, were presented in what Bode claimed to be an approximation of a fourteenth-century Florentine domestic interior, which he described as a 'saloon'. In the saloon he also placed ('to put life into it') 'a few pieces of the 'best' (Renaissance) furniture, which included doorframes, tapestries and carpets. 91 The overall aim of these galleries was 'to give



96. Basilica, Bode-Museum, Berlin

the works of art a modern setting', which corresponded to how they were originally intended to be seen but without reproducing old rooms, as Bode held decorative arts museums did. ⁹² He wrote that 'all material aspects' namely lighting and architecture were to 'resemble the apartment ... originally intended'. ⁹³

Bode was mindful that the primary role of these interiors was to create a suitable environment for exhibiting paintings and sculpture. He stressed that each work had to be isolated, so that it was visible, and complained that most museums packed pictures and sculptures together 'like herrings'. In such an environment, he argued, the visitor could only become distracted by the crowded rooms and fail to be edified by an 'individual' masterpiece. ⁹⁴ In practice, Bode's ideal galleries were not sustained. It was reported as early as 1910 that on account of the lack of space, the pictures on the upper floors were displayed in crowded rooms alongside furniture and sculpture. Bode lamented the effect that this had on his arrangement, writing



that, 'the different character of painting and the plastic arts' and 'the contrasting colours' led to 'disharmonies'. He also noted that, 'the sheer physicality of the sculptures detracts from the merely painted image, which tends to look flat and ineffectual beside them'. I would argue that as 'Die Ausstattung der Gemälde' was published in 1912, a mere two years after the Renaissance rooms began to appear cluttered, the role of frames and framing was a significant one.

 View of the Picture Gallery and the Sculpture Collection, displaying fifteenth-century Italian art, Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, Berlin, in 1905-7

BODE'S RE-FRAMING POLICY

In 'Die Ausstattung der Gemälde' Bode outlined the key principles which underpinned his policy of re-framing paintings with frames of the same country of origin and date. The article appeared in a publication aimed at the Friends of the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum, who were not only committed to the institution as a whole but, as

Bode acknowledged, had contributed financially to his re-framing strategy. The article is helpful because in it Bode explains how he created a market for old frames and why they were more suitable than reproductions of them. Indeed the article can be read as an attempt to persuade his readers of the unsuitability of Gallery, that is uniform, frames, like so-called Pitti, Dresden and Schinkel frames. To this end, Bode argued that the harmony which previous generations sought through uniform frames could be achieved by arranging works of the same school together, which when surrounded by frames of the same period and date would naturally complement one another. 96

The innovative nature of Bode's re-framing policy is reflected in the fact that there was no pre-existing organisational structure through which he could collect antique frames as empty objects, as no market for them existed. Instead, desirable frames were removed from what Bode described as fairly anonymous panels or from copies of masterpieces. The fact that the owners of these frames attached little value to them as objects is demonstrated by the low prices they initially commanded. 97 Bode maintained that this collecting strategy could yield good, if serendipitous, results, as his acquisition of what he claimed to be the original frame to Fra Bartolommeo's Assumption of the Virgin shows (Fig. 98). Bode explained that the frame, which he found around a modern painting in Pistoia, had been separated from the Assumption of the Virgin when the English merchant and collector Edward Solly purchased it. 98 The extent to which Bode's reappraisal of original frames marked a major departure in attitude is suggested by written evidence indicating that, in previous centuries, original frames were not considered constitutive of the panel. Instead copies of the original paintings were inserted into frames that were not sold with the panels. One such example was Bode's discovery of the original all'antica frame to the 'Colonna Raphael', which he was unable to purchase because the owner believed he owned the genuine painting and not a copy. 99

From 1900 Bode's approach to frame collecting became more systematic, a process that began with the provision of regular and sufficient funds from the *Fonds für sächliche Anschaffungen* (Fund for Material Acquisitions). In 1898 Friedländer wrote to ask for an



98. Fra Bartolomeo, Assumption of the Virgin, about 1507-8, formerly Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (destroyed in May 1945)

increase to this fund from 9000 marks per year to 10000 marks, noting that copies of old frames might have to be commissioned for the large Italian altarpiece, where so-called anachronistic old frames could not be procured. He stressed that the overall aim of the fund was to acquire historically 'correct' frames *en-masse* to use throughout the gallery. ¹⁰⁰

Consequently, dealers were instructed to locate frames on Bode's behalf, which in turn reinvigorated the status and value of antique frames in the wider market. Or Surviving correspondence in Berlin suggests that Bode asked dealers to find very specific frame types, which implies that they were intended for particular paintings. In 1912 Elia Volpi informed Bode that after extensive searching he had

found a Florentine polychromed frame of 1400. The style of the frame was not the only motivating factor determining whether it was acquired or not. Volpi also remarked on the quality of the frame surface, specifically the patina of the gilding, which he felt would reflect the light. ¹⁰² It is frustrating that we do not know what this frame was used for.

In general, it appears that Italian dealers had considerable influence on how the Berlin collections were re-framed. From Bode's regular correspondence with Bardini it is evident that the two exchanged photographs of potentially eligible frames, alongside furniture, paintings and sculptures. Good relations with Bardini were a key element in Bode's acquisitions policy. While acting as an agent for the South Kensington Museum, Lord Leighton described the importance of Bardini's shop to his employers:

I have been to Bardini's ... He says that Bode comes very frequently ... in old days, when there was little or no competition, a Museum like yours, could afford to sit at home to a certain extent ... Now competition is very keen and very intelligent, and on the other hand everything in Italy goes to Bardini's and whoever goes there oftenest has immeasurable advantage of the others. ¹⁰⁴

The archival evidence suggests that as a result of the exchange of photographs, specific frames were sent to Berlin. For instance, a Bardini invoice from 1888 describes two antique gilded frames destined for the 'Madonna' attributed to the Sienese Neroccio dei Landi and another Madonna by Giovanni Stefano. ¹⁰⁵ In a letter dated 13 March 1904, Bardini informed Bode that he had found a frame for a painting by Girolamo da Udine. ¹⁰⁶

The same letter provides us with an insight into how, on the other hand, new frames were commissioned and designed. Bardini asked Bode whether he had received the large frames, 'both the original and the copy'. These episodes suggest either that Bode would purchase an old frame and then have a copy made by Bardini, or that unrelated frames could be transported together. I believe that it was the former. On a more general level, the new frames that Bode commissioned were faithful copies of existing frames and

undertaken in relation to the specific history and provenance of a given painting, rather than being Neo-Renaissance in style and applied in a blanket fashion, as had occurred at the National Gallery, London, under Wornum and Eastlake. A good example of this practice is demonstrated by the re-framing of a *tondo* by Botticelli of the *Madonna and Child with Angels* (now lost). The Schinkel frame (square with a round aperture) was replaced by a copy of a frame with *fleur-de-lis* ornament, which Horne had shown was an original Botticelli frame type. ¹⁰⁸

Bode implies that antique frames were frequently adapted to fit their new incumbents. For example, he refers to golden Dutch seventeenth-century emblem frames that were too difficult to cut on account of their ornament. 109 Considering that Bode had studied these frames extensively as decorative arts objects, one might ask what he sought to achieve by using them for re-framing, especially as copies of them were readily available. In his 1912 article, Bode argued that re-framing, using antique frames of the same age and origin as the paintings, completed the object because they harmonised with one another. For Bode, harmony arose when the profile, scale and colour of the frame and tone of the gold on the frame entered into a successful dialogue with the painting. This thinking was indebted to how Bode perceived the relationship between paintings and their original frames, which he believed to be effectively reproducible in the present. Indeed Bode claimed that his policy of selecting antique frames which completed works of art had been so successful that a number of his re-framing choices had been assumed to be original. Amongst the examples he cites of re-framing seeming original, was the tabernacle frame he had placed around the Madonna with Saint Jerome by Raphael (Fig. 99). III The tabernacle frame with its associations with the sacred provides a suitably devotional environment for the painting, as well as being approximately of the same age.

Despite Bode's seeming insistence that harmony could be achieved by selecting a frame of the same origin and date as the painting, he was in practice far more pragmatic regarding his frame selections. This is shown by the fact that he often used Italian (mainly ungilded Florentine walnut frames) to re-frame German and Netherlandish





- 99. Raphael, Madonna with Saints Jerome and Francis, 1501-2, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (fifteenth-century tabernacle frame)
- 100. Albrecht Dürer, Portrait of a Venetian Woman, 1506, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (Venetian painted cassetta frame, about 1500)

paintings because he found that they were more readily available than Northern European frames, which were accorded lesser value than their Italian counterparts. For example, a panel by Albrecht Dürer depicting a *Venetian woman* (about 1506) was placed in a Venetian painted cassetta frame of 1500 (Fig. 100). One could argue that this re-framing was appropriate because the sitter was from Venice and Dürer had worked in the city, although the panel itself was not painted there.

The importance Bode gave to frames in the Renaissance rooms can be explained in relation to wider methodological concerns of the twentieth century arising from the 'modern' settings he created. Frames of the 'appropriate' date and origin could harmonise with furniture, paintings, sculpture and tapestries from the same period, creating the 'totality' that Bode wanted to impress upon visitors and, in many respects, acting as Friedländer's 'bridge' between objects

and interiors. When viewed in this light, frames operated to ensure that important paintings were not isolated from the wider material culture of which they were a part. As we have seen, it was equally or indeed more important to Bode that visitors could view and study the paintings on display without becoming distracted. Problematically, this harmonious totality threatened the 'ideal' viewing and study of paintings in isolation, particularly when the rooms became over-crowded with art objects. Georg Simmel's consideration of the roles frames played in fencing-off the external is almost contemporaneous to the construction of the Renaissance rooms in Berlin. Arguably frames that completed the painting might have been perceived as more effective borders than those which created a visual disjuncture with the painting. But what function did antique frames play outside the specific environment of the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum?

Bode's influence on re-framing in London: collectors and the National Gallery

It has been argued that Bode's most tangible impact in terms of re-framing lay in the effect he had on frame scholarship and on wider re-framing taste, particularly amongst private collectors of his day and later on in public collections. These two issues were addressed in Voss's aforementioned preface to the innovatory 1929 exhibition of empty frames. The 139 frames (mainly Italian, French and Dutch) on display, and photographs of them in the accompanying Katalog der Ausstellung 'Antike Rahmen' im Künstlerhaus, were catalogued with remarkable chronological precision and accuracy, standing the test of time. One example indicative of this specificity read 'Florenz. Um 1470'. This type of cataloguing was intended to assist collectors, both private and institutional, to acquire appropriate frames. Amongst these private collectors was George Salting (1835-1909), who bequeathed some of his paintings, framed according to Bode's example, to the National Gallery in 1910.

Receipts from art and antique dealers in George Salting's archive

held in the Guildhall Library, London, show that between 1877 and 1900 the Anglo-Australian collector purchased a wide variety of 'oriental' rugs and vases, Louis XV furniture, and Renaissance *cassoni* and cabinets, as well as paintings, prints and drawings. ¹¹⁴ Although Salting's paintings came to the National Gallery in the form of a bequest in 1910, Penny maintains that he had consciously collected and shaped them for the National Gallery rather than the two rooms he had at the Thatched House Club on St. James's Street, London. ¹¹⁵ From the perspective of this thesis, it is how Salting reframed these paintings that is of importance.

Letters in the Bode archives show that the Berlin museum Director advised Salting on potential acquisitions. ¹¹⁶ Although there is no evidence of a sustained discussion of frames and framing in their correspondence, the subject does emerge on a more general level. On one occasion Salting wrote to Bode: 'I know you think highly of the Leyland Botticelli, 'Virgin & Child with Saint John' bought by Mr Kay, i.e. Colnaghi ... I could buy it now at cost price – I didn't like the heavy modern frame'. ¹¹⁷

Salting, like Bode, retained original frames that survived, including the original fifteenth-century Italian leaf-ornamented frame to The Virgin and Child with Saint John by a follower of Ghirlandaio (NG2502) (Fig. 101) and that surrounding The Virgin and Child by Fiorenzo di Lorenzo (NG2483) (Fig. 102). 118 When re-framing was necessary, the collector employed two approaches. The first, and more frequent one, was to adapt antique frames to fit paintings for which they were not intended, and the second was to commission copies of frames that were considered suitable to the painting in question. Archival evidence suggests that antique frames were collected from a number of sources. 'Italian frames' were purchased from C. Buck, who described himself as a 'Carver, Gilder, Frame Maker and Dealer in Works of Art'. 119 He also restored and altered the size of the frames. 120 It is noteworthy that Buck did not identify the date or precise origin of these 'Italian' frames, a non-specificity which is occasionally demonstrated in Salting's re-framing activities. For example what ostensibly appears to be a Tuscan carved walnut mirror frame which Penny dates to 1530-1570 now surrounds Portrait of a Boy

(Overleaf left)

101. Davide Ghirlandaio, The Virgin and Child with Saint John the Baptist, probably about 1490-1500, National Gallery, London (replica frame)

(Overleaf right)

102. Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, The Virgin and Child, about 1473, National Gallery, London (its original frame)









- 103. Jacometto, Portrait of a Boy, 1475-98, National Gallery, London (Tuscan mid-sixteenth-century mirror frame)
- 104. Sebastiano del Piombo, Judith (or Salome?), 1510, National Gallery, London (Venetian sixteenth-century cassetta frame)

by Jacometto of 1475-98 (NG2509) (Fig. 103). On inspection it becomes apparent that the bottom and top edge of the frame are recent additions of inferior quality. The picture itself is Venetian and therefore the Tuscan frame (recognisable from its ornament) seems not only to be the wrong type of frame for the painting but mismatched in terms of origin. However the 'new' frame does seem to transform the panel into a complete 'Renaissance' object and the walnut harmonises with the background tones in the painting. There are examples where Salting re-framed paintings with a frame of the same date and origin. A Venetian sixteenth-century frame 122 now hangs around Salting's *Judith (or Salome?)* by Sebastiano del Piombo (NG2493) of 1510 (Fig. 104). The decision to select a frame of the same origin and approximate date as the painting must be attributable to



105. Northern Italian painter, The Virgin and Child with Roses and Laurels, about 1510-20, National Gallery, London (NG2495) (sixteenth-century Italian frame)

Bode. Salting's second re-framing approach was to commission reproductions of antique frames from Giovacchino Corsi based on Guggenheim's examples in *Le cornici*. Penny cites as an example of this the copy of the large altarpiece frame in the church of Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi in Florence, dated 1514 and originally made for Ridolfo Ghirlandaio's *Nativity*, which is now in the Hermitage Museum. The Virgin and Child with Roses by a Northern Italian painter (NG2495) (Fig. 105). All of these frames were used to produce an 'authentic setting' for the paintings.

Salting's framing choices had an enormous impact on attitudes to re-framing at the National Gallery. Robert Benson, identified the frame to *Judith (or Salome?)* (NG2493) as indicative of an innovation in framing, namely selecting frames that were either made in the same period and location as the painting, or commissioning a copy of such a frame.

THE NATIONAL GALLERY: ART HISTORY AND AESTHETIC DISPLAY

By the late nineteenth century the connection between museums and the art historical discipline had been firmly established, although how effectively it was implemented was the subject of debate. Jacob Burckhardt saved his exasperated comments for the South Kensington Museum in 1879, arguing that the confused displays meant that art history could not be effectively understood or pursued, writing: 'Where shall our art history lead when a collection is assembled in this manner and nobody provides a general view?' 126

While the importance of demonstrating the history of art was undisputed, critics expected it to be presented to the public in a harmonious and beautiful way. Referring again to the South Kensington Museum, the Keeper of the Wallace Collection and Art Critic for the Daily Telegraph Art, Sir Claude Phillips, maintained that the museum should combine 'scientific differentiation and dissection' with 'harmonious combination of all the artistic products of the period'. 127 The underlying aim of this synthesis was, for Phillips, the creation of a 'temple of the finest art for the aesthetic satisfaction of the public' and demonstration of the various different styles and the 'developments of applied art generally in their progress through the centuries'. 128 The National Gallery was never intended to be a decorative arts museum, but in focusing on frames as historical objects, Directors, Keepers and Trustees necessarily became engaged in debates concerning the decorative arts and style. The relationship between decorative arts debates and the National Gallery have hitherto been largely unexplored. This lacuna is understandable as it reflects the historically embedded, but nonetheless problematic, distinction between the fine and decorative arts that emerged in the later Renaissance.

As stated previously, at the National Gallery, art history was pursued in its catalogues and displays, mainly through attempts to arrange the paintings by 'school' and date. At the heart of the concept of 'school' was the problematic issue of style, which was assumed to be dictated by region and time. After listing the various artists represented at the National Gallery, the official catalogue of 1895 defined the term 'school' for readers thus:

it denotes all the painters of a given country ... as the Italian School. In a more restricted sense, it refers to the characteristic style which may distinguish the painters of a particular locality or period; as, the Bolognese School. In its most limited sense, it signifies the distinctive style of a particular master; as the School of Raphael. ¹²⁹

From the 1880s onwards, new display areas at the National Gallery created more space for a Schools-based display (although it remained highly compromised). The National Gallery Board Minutes of 1887 noted:

The desirability of classifying them [the paintings] under the several schools of painting to which they belong had been apparent in the earliest development of the gallery ... The recent addition of five new rooms afforded an opportunity, the first in the history of the Gallery, for attempting a more complete and systematic sub-division of the pictures.¹³⁰

The success of the 1887 re-hang is demonstrated in a guide to Europe written for American (Grand) tourists, where the author, Grant Allen, observed that the National Gallery's collections in 1923 were 'illustrative and well displayed'. ¹³¹ He was clearly able to identify for his readers the various Schools, including the Tuscans with a 'tolerable Botticelli', Venetians, the Umbrians (being 'only soso') and the 'small' collection of Ferrarese and Bolognese paintings.

The clear display by Schools must have created an impetus for

the introduction of a re-framing policy that reinforced the origin and date of a given painting. In 1907 the Director, Sir Charles Holroyd, reported to the Trustees that he had received a gift from Joseph Duveen of a French frame 'of a suitable date for the picture of [Hyacinthe] Rigaud¹³² lately bought by the Trustees'.¹³³ I will show, through the example of the re-framing of Giovanni Bellini's *Doge Leonardo Loredan* (NG189) (Fig. 40), that although re-framing using antique frames reinforced concepts of style and School, it also engaged with notions of aesthetic satisfaction that Sir Claude Philips had outlined in 1908.

In 1907 the Bond Street art dealer and collector, Sir George Hunter Donaldson (1845-1925), whose clients included George Salting, gave a sixteenth-century or late fifteenth century Venetian cassetta frame to the National Gallery that was used to re-frame the Doge Leonardo Loredan (NG189). 134 By placing a Venetian late fifteenth-century frame around a Venetian early sixteenth-century painting, the origin of both the painting and sitter were underlined, strengthening the connection between the frame and image, so that they became mutually reinforcing references to the Venetian 'style'. This intention is however complicated by the amendments proposed to the frame. On 14 November 1911 it was recorded that Holroyd had sketched the coat of arms of Doge Loredan (which he had taken from Carpaccio's series of Saint Ursula now in the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice) and wanted to place a carved version of the heraldic device on the frame. 135 There is no photographic evidence or indeed suggestion on the frame itself that the coat of arms was ever applied. But the proposal is suggestive of a desire to reinforce the identity of the sitter contained inside the frame, and indicative of how frames were used to act as commentaries on the subject matter of the painting. It is interesting to note that coats of arms were more common on altarpieces and cassoni than on other types of objects, and thus, this represents a transfer from a more monumental context to a portrait frame. The most significant actual intervention to the frame was the additional layer added to the entablature, which heightened its qualities as a tabernacle frame. This act transformed the portrait into a quasi-sacred object (tabernacle frames being traditionally associated with sacred

106. Frederic Leighton, Fatidica, about 1894, National Museums Liverpool, Liverpool (The Lady Lever Art Gallery) (original frame)



subjects) and, in doing so, completely recontextualised it. Although the frame is in some respects appropriate for the painting, I would argue that this act was motivated by a desire to celebrate the artist rather than honour the sitter.

Bellini depicted the Doge in ceremonial dress consisting of a cape and horned cap (*corno ducale*). ¹³⁶ The style of dress was traditional (instituted in 1176)¹³⁷ but the use of white damask cloth was an innovation. ¹³⁸ Humfrey suggests that the fact that the costume is white rather than the traditional crimson or gold, could be interpreted as a devotional gesture to the Virgin, white being associated with the Virgin's feast day. ¹³⁹ If this were the case and it were known in the nineteenth century, a frame with connotations of the sacred would have been fitting. The Doge was considered an intermediary between the Venetians and the Kingdom of Heaven, and the tabernacle frame seems to underline the Doge's spiritual

authority. 140 But this reading is not sustained by reference to contemporary National Gallery catalogue entries on the painting. Instead their focus was on Giovanni Bellini who was celebrated as 'one of the most distinguished painters of the fifteenth century'. ¹⁴¹ From this evidence it would appear that the additions to the frame were motivated by a desire to celebrate the artist and the painting as being a 'Bellini'. 142 Moreover there was an aesthetic preference for tabernacle frames in this period which was clearly manifested in how artists framed their own paintings. This is evident in the Neo-classical/Neo-Renaissance frame that surrounds Lord Leighton's depiction of the Roman goddess Fatidica (Fig. 106), in a work of the same name c. 1893-4 (Liverpool Museums). 143 Arguably, interest in the frames surrounding Leighton's paintings might have been revived by the studio sale of his work held by Christie's in July 1896, which would have included frames that Leighton had chosen specifically for his paintings. 144

The 'new' frame around the Bellini portrait primarily supported the chronological sub-divisions according to School, but it also transformed a portrait painting into a complete object, which if we are to accept Arnheim's claims, could consequently share space more readily with the 'real world' because it was protected by its frame. ¹⁴⁵ In the following section I will show how the idea of completeness through re-framing was later used to isolate paintings from the world, by which I mean the Gallery's interiors, which were conceived as being separate from the everyday.

FRAMES AND BELONGING

Charlotte Klonk identifies curatorial focus on privacy, interiority, and domesticity at the beginning of the twentieth century as an important shift in museological practice. This focus was clearly evident in the evocative recreation of mainly domestic Renaissance interiors at the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum in Berlin. At the National Gallery, however, the more important change seems to have been the renewed focus on the legitimate function and role of museums as repositories of works removed from all kinds of other contexts. Di-

rector Charles Holmes proclaimed that 'like Shannon and Ricketts I was a "museum specimen" proud of our London collections, grateful for what I had learned in them, and keen to see them perfected'. 147

As Holmes' statement makes clear, his stance in relation to museums was part of a wider debate of which I refer to just a few protagonists. Despite claiming that they were 'idiotic' (and then contradicting this point), the designer Charles Ricketts was a passionate advocate of museums, writing: 'It is wicked, idiotic & sentimental to leave good pictures in churches; why not in public w.c'.s or at the corner of streets?'

He continued to argue that as art no longer 'belong[ed] to the world' presumably in terms of its everyday use and in relation to the market value, it should be transferred to museums. He rallied against 'sentimentalists' who thought that religious art should be seen in its 'proper place ... obliterated by smoke & candles & the breath of the faithful (when they exist)' and the 'trumpery' placed on altars. ¹⁴⁸ Ricketts finished his apology for art museums by criticising Italian export laws which he claimed prevented great works leaving churches and being displayed in 'better hands in London'. 149 Ricketts' comments can be aligned with Marcel Proust's criticism of period rooms, justified on the basis that paintings and objects in museums had been deliberately separated from their original setting. Proust wrote: 'Our age is infected with a mania for showing things only in the environment that properly belongs to them, thereby suppressing the essential thing, the act of the mind which isolated them from that environment'. 150

He does not dwell on the specific 'mind' that undertook the separation, which is implied to be that of the artist, but practically it could range from art dealers to museum curators.

In England, the arguments made to promote and support museums, culminated in the creation of the National Arts Collections Fund (NACF) in 1903. Founded by Lady Herringham, Roger Fry, Sir Claude Phillips, and D. S. McColl, the NACF sought to address the 'drain of masterpieces' from the United Kingdom. ¹⁵¹The chairman, Lord Crawford and Balcarres, was succeeded by none other than R. H. Benson, who as we shall see, reconsidered National Gallery framing policy in light of Bode's activities in Berlin. ¹⁵²Important-

ly, the founding of the NACF refocused debates from investigating the controversial aspects surrounding the removal of paintings from their original settings to the National Gallery, to their removal from the United Kingdom being the controversial act. This also prompted a rethinking of framing policy and the relationship between the *ergon* and *parergon*, of a kind made evident in Benson's 'Notes on Frames', which, as mentioned, was an appendix to the Curzon Enquiry (1914). ¹⁵³

The Curzon Enquiry (1914) considered how to prevent masterpieces from private collections, viewed as national treasures, being sold abroad and investigated the best ways of managing national collections. This emphasis on national interest, necessarily crucial to the National Gallery, was prompted by the growing power struggles between France, England and Germany. These played out, prior to the outbreak of the First World War, in part through state-sponsored public cultural munificence and magnificence. Simultaneously and, perhaps more importantly, the activities of American collectors who were buying antiques and old masters from impoverished English aristocrats were viewed increasingly as a threat to the preservation of the nation's treasures in England.

It was during the Curzon Enquiry that for the first time frames and framing were treated as a distinctive part of the National Gallery's history and subjected to sustained analysis by Benson in his capacity as a National Gallery Trustee. Benson and Bode both shared the conviction that an appropriate substitute for a lost original frame was one that was contemporary in design and gilt in the style of the period and school in which a picture belongs... Although there is no copy of Die Ausstattung der Gemälde' in the National Gallery Library, Benson must have read it; the uncanny overlap between the two documents cannot be explained in any other way. Moreover, although frames were not discussed in the correspondence between Bode and Benson held in the Bode archive, they do indicate the friendship between them as well as their shared professional interests. It is therefore not implausible to suggest that they discussed frames and re-framing. Total capacity the suggest that they discussed frames and re-framing.

It would not have been unusual for the National Gallery to look to German museological models for inspiration and, indeed, to rival

them. As discussed in Chapter 2 and as Susanna Avery-Quash, Alan Crookham and Christopher Whitehead have shown, being established later than its counterparts on the Continent, the National Gallery was compared to, and influenced by, European curatorial strategies and art history throughout the nineteenth century. 158 It is odd that neither Berlin nor Bode are mentioned in 'Notes on Frames'. Perhaps at a time of heightened tension between Germany and England, and in a document that was inherently patriotic, it would have been impolitic to attribute re-framing taste to Bode, especially given to whom the 'Notes' were directed. The less likely option is that Benson was working in isolation. It appears he did not have specialist knowledge of frames. For example he dismissed the new frame surrounding Giovanni Bellini's Doge Leonardo Loredan (NG189) (Fig. 40) as a 'failure' because lamp-black or soot had been applied to it 'to simulate age'. 159 As we have seen, the frame to this painting is late fifteenth not nineteenth century (with the exception of the entablature). Benson also described the frame surrounding Ludovico Mazzolino's Christ Disputing with the Doctors (NG1495) (Fig. 107) as appropriate because the frame design and 'low toned water-gilding finish' combined to 'set off' the picture. 160 This judgement is slightly puzzling as the frame is clearly French (apparently Benson did not know this) and dates from the eighteenth century, rendering it completely inappropriate for an Italian sixteenth-century painting according to Benson's own criteria.

The catalyst behind the unprecedented inclusion of frames in a Government Enquiry might be illuminated by Lord Curzon's remark that 'the best pictures should be hung where they can most easily be seen, and best studied, and where they will be in due relation to any other masterpieces, either by the same or other painters'. ¹⁶¹

Curzon's comment emphasises the importance he gave to the choosing, study and comparison of paintings, which directly implicated frames and framing. As we have seen, Sir Charles Eastlake discussed how frames could be used to isolate artworks, thereby facilitating inspection and study of them, while gilding was perceived to be able to control the reception of the colours in the painting by the viewer. By contrast, under Frederic Burton the 'San Giobbe' frames were used to signal that their contents were considered



107. Lodovico Mazzolino, Christ Disputing with the Doctors in the Temple, about 1522-4, National Gallery, London (French eighteenth-century frame)

masterpieces and create a visual dialogue with other comparable works hanging in the Gallery. ¹⁶² Concerns about frames and their function are evident in 'Notes on Frames', although I will show that there were other new, motivating factors driving Benson's interest in the subject.

Benson acknowledged that original frames, by which he meant old ones, had 'occasionally' been acquired with pictures, that preserved 'the setting intended by the artist' (he used 'setting' in a limited sense to indicate the frame and not the context). Quite correctly, and as Bode had done the year before, he argued that Victorian re-gilding altered the surface of these original frames 'detracting from the effect of the whole'. Indeed Benson argued that this new gold was then burnished to the extent that it resembled metal,

108. Bernard Partridge, Hans Across the Sea (Punch, 12 May 1909)

a phenomenon he likened to being 'hit'. 165 The Trustee claimed that these activities created such a distracting glare that even London dirt could not diminish it. This glare must, in Benson's eyes, have undermined the central aim of the picture frame and the wider aims of the Curzon Enquiry, which were to enable the viewer to inspect the nation's masterpieces. 166 A logical extension of this argument was that if paintings could not be well seen in the National Gallery, their justification for being there was undermined. Indeed, frames and framing became an increasingly significant way of underlining the fact that important paintings by foreign painters, which had been in the country for centuries, irreversibly and incontrovertibly belonged on the walls of the National Gallery. Benson argued this case by borrowing from an established rhetoric pioneered by Guggenheim and Bode, which maintained that appropriate frames completed paintings, a central characteristic of completeness being stylistic wholeness. By extension, 'whole' frames and paintings were closed off from reality.

In Bernard Partridge's caricature 'Hans across the sea' (Fig. 108) published in *Punch* on 12 May 1909, the figure of Christina Duchess of Denmark from Holbein's painting known by the same name, is shown being dragged from her frame. Her abductor (America) wears striped trousers and a starred hat and clutches a sack full of dollars to his chest. This caricature bestows America's buying power with an unsavoury edge. The caricature was intended to critique the potential sale of *Christina Duchess of Denmark* (NG2475) by its owner the Duke of Norfolk in 1909. The sale was controversial because the painting had been on loan to the National Gallery since 1880 and had come to be viewed as a 'national treasure'. ¹⁶⁷ As D.S. McColl wrote, 'The Norfolk Holbein had been so long at the National Gallery that people had come to think it public property and resented its sale'. ¹⁶⁸

Alarm was not linked to this isolated incident alone. In the introduction to *Old Masters and Modern Art*, Holmes lamented: 'Our Old Masters and our other ancestral treasures vanish steadily across the Atlantic with little to hinder them'. ¹⁶⁹

Partridge's caricature might also be read as a commentary on how the relationship between paintings and the frames that surrounded



STRANGER (U.S.A.) "ONCE ABOARD THE LINER, AND THE GYURL IS MINE!"

[The Duke of Norfolk has sold Hans Holbein's masterpiece, "Christina, Duchess of Milan," and there is a danger of its leaving the country.]

them was perceived at the beginning of the twentieth century particularly in relation to the idea of national treasures. In the caricature the frame remains fixed to the wall. The Duchess's kidnapper makes no attempt to remove the painting with 'its' frame, suggesting that he does not consider it to be an intrinsic part of the work (indeed it is the central figure which is of importance to him rather than gathering up the background too, which would be too literal anyway and undermine the joke). In contrast the Duchess's right hand grips the edge of the frame, while her left foot is captured at the very moment she reluctantly steps out of it. The caricature not only underlines the protective functions of frames, but it seems to declare that, at least in this instance, the painting and frame are inseparable, the implicit argument being that they are a whole and the frame belongs where it is. Partridge shows the rupture of this whole as a violent act.

The implications of this reading are that the illusion of wholeness had to be (re)created at the National Gallery, since many of the 'national' treasures it contained had been removed from their original frames. Bode's re-framing policy, reformulated for English audiences by Benson, was a fundamental means of recovering lost wholeness. Indeed recreating wholeness was a means of ensuring that paintings did not become 'loose'. On one level, paintings that were inappropriately framed were more vulnerable to being purchased by American collectors, as it meant that the two objects pulled away from one another and from the wall, liberating the panels that should have been safely fixed. ¹⁷⁰ By contrast in *Desirable Aliens* also by Bernard Partridge (Punch, 31 January 1906) (Fig. 109) Velazquez and John Singer Sargent are shown carrying paintings by their own hands (The Rokeby Venus (NG2057, 1647-51) and Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth, now in the Tate (1889)) into the 'national collection'. Here the frame and painting are shown as part of a complete and closed whole on entering the National Gallery, a stark contrast to the rupture that existed when paintings were at risk of being sold and leaving the nation.

According to Benson's National Gallery frame history, between 1850 and 1880, opportunities to acquire 'fine original frames' had been lost. ¹⁷¹ Instead, the National Gallery had retained eighteenth-century



DESIRABLE ALIENS.

[The "Verus and Cupid" of Velasquez, and Mr. Sargent's "Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth," were both last week secured for the National Collection.]

frames selected by private collectors for domestic settings, or commissioned uniform pattern 'Gallery Frames'. For Benson, the presence of eighteenth-century frames 'fluted for instance, like Georgian silver around paintings by Correggio, Titian, Catena, Jacopo Bassano, Mabuse, Ruysadael (sic), Velázquez and 'Even Lippo di Dalmasio (XIVth century)' was 'anachronistic'. 173 Benson also objected to the English standard pattern Gallery Frames which the National Gallery had commissioned, instead of copies of original frames, during the 1850s and 1860s. Perhaps reiterating Bode, the Trustee argued that the uniformity of the standard pattern frames imposed on the National Gallery's presentation of its paintings was outmoded and made no specific connection to the paintings they surrounded. By extension, one could argue that for Benson 'anachronistic' frames underlined the fact that the paintings they surrounded had

109. Bernard Partridge, *Desirable Aliens* (*Punch*, 31 January 1906)

been redisplayed in an entirely different context and consequently did not 'naturally' belong to the Gallery's walls. Though of course uniform frames do, in a different way, assert that the paintings they surround belong there.

In Benson's discussion of frame-making techniques we gain further insight into why he objected to the prevailing re-framing policy at the National Gallery. According to Benson, better-designed frames had been commissioned after 1880, but they were blighted by their execution and finish. The examples Benson used to illustrate this point were the frames modelled on the architectural portals, discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 (Figs. 65-68). He lamented the fact that although their form, design and intention were 'praiseworthy', they did not assimilate with the Gallery walls. The notion that 'appropriate' frames assimilated or became part of the wall, was inextricably linked to the belief that the paintings they surrounded had an inviolable right to remain on display on the National Gallery's walls. For Benson the all'antica frames were a 'Hun' (a hostile invader and term which must reflect tense Anglo-German relations), standing out from the wall rather than being fixed to it and being seen as unnatural to it. ¹⁷⁴ Benson maintained that the unsatisfactory juxtaposition between these frames and the wall occurred because the ornament (on the frames) had not been carved or executed in pastiglia and the gold leaf had not been applied over a red bole, as it would have been by Renaissance craftsmen. Benson argued that if the frame-makers (Dolman) had not simply copied architectural forms but employed Renaissance frame-making techniques too, the 'tone' and 'reflets' (sic - reflections) of the original frames to the paintings would have been recreated. 175 Benson's discussion of 'tone and reflets' [sic] was another aspect of his wider argument that frames and paintings should work symbiotically. When this did not occur, either because the frames were of an inappropriate design or finish, the panel ruptured from what Benson viewed as its setting, and became incomplete, loose and vulnerable to capture. Benson also looked forward in 'Notes', providing us with a unique means of examining the foundations of early twentieth-century framing and re-framing policy at the National Gallery (the legacy of which the present framing department are engaging with), but which ultimately

required decades to come to fruition. Benson's first recommendation was that more fifteenth- and sixteenth-century frames should be purchased, which demonstrates that the main focus of acquisition was Italian Renaissance art in this first period. The When original frames could not be bought, he advised the Curzon Enquiry to commission copies from Giovacchino Corsi of Siena, based on designs in Michelangelo Guggenheim's *Le cornici* (1897). Giovacchino Corsi has been described as the foremost imitator of antique frames and cassoni in the nineteenth century; his specialism was pastiglia that looked old. The Corsi made frames for Berlin, the Pinacoteca di Brera and English collectors including Salting and George Holford. This suggests that re-framing taste at the National Gallery was part of a more general phenomenon that was then adapted to its specific needs and concerns, namely museological ones.

Benson's influence, and that of Trustees in general, on re-framing and perhaps the broader agenda behind 'Notes of Frames' is made evident in the correspondence relating to the commissioning of a frame from Corsi for *The Virgin and Child* from Masaccio's Pisa polyptych of 1426 (NG3046). This panel had been 'saved' for the nation by the NACF in 1916, when purchased directly from the owner Canon Arthur Sutton. The re-framing appears to have been prompted by Holmes' description of the previous frame as 'disgraceful'. Holmes' judgement may of course have been a response to the state of preservation of the previous frame. However if this judgement is located in the broader context of the Curzon Enquiry and the aims of the NACF, it becomes inextricably linked to discontent at visible signs of rupture between the panel and its 'inappropriate' frame.

The National Gallery catalogue from the period makes explicit reference to Vasari's description of the Pisa polyptych in its original configuration in the second edition of the *Lives of the Artists* (1568). The description reads:

In the Church of the Carmine in Pisa, on a panel that is in a chapel in the tramezzo, there is a Madonna with the Child, by his hand, and at his feet are certain little angels sounding instruments ... On either side of the Madonna are Saint Peter, Saint John the

Baptist, Saint Julian, and Saint Nicholas ... In the predella below are scenes from the lives of those Saints, with little figures; and in the centre are the three Magi offering their treasures to Christ ... And above, as an ornament for the said panel, there are, in several squares, many saints round a Crucifix.¹⁸²

There have been a number of reconstructions of the Masaccio altarpiece but there is no dispute that, as Vasari's description makes clear, it was a polyptych and the National Gallery's panel was only one part of a multi-paneled altarpiece. In 1903 Giovanni Poggi published an article entitled 'La Tavola di Masaccio del Carmine di Pisa' in *Miscellanea d'Arte*, which referred to the original framing of Masaccio's Pisa polyptych. He implied that it would have been originally set inside a Gothic framework made by Antone di Biagio da Siena, which in turn would have been placed on a marble altar built by Pippo di Giovanni di Gante, a Pisan mason. ¹⁸³ Conjecturally, the renewed interest in a dismembered altarpiece combined with the fact that it had been recently 'saved' for the nation, might have encouraged the decision to re-frame the panel in a way which concealed the fact that it had been previously part of a larger structure and thus further underlining its inviolable right to remain in London.

On 2 March 1917, Benson wrote to Holmes praising him for choosing the original frame surrounding Gentile da Fabriano's Adoration of the Magi in the Uffizi as the model for the new frame design (plate 2 in Guggenheim's Le cornici) (Figs. 50 and 87). In Le cornici Guggenheim correctly described the frame as Tuscan and dating from the first half of the fifteenth century. ¹⁸⁴ The Tuscan Gothic polyptych frame must have been viewed as a suitable choice for the painting since it was of approximately the same date and had a similar place of origin to the panel and could therefore have created the illusion of a complete and uncorrupted stylistic whole. Moreover, in a letter dated 16 May [1917], Benson suggested to Holmes that old gold should be used and no blue introduced for fear of making the new frame look 'fake'. 185 The evident concern that the frame should look 'original', serves to highlight once again that no aspect of the re-framing process could threaten the appearance to the public of an authentic whole that was no longer loose and, by extension, availa-



ble for sale. There is a photograph from 1928 (Fig. 110) in which the panel is shown in a replica of the frame Guggenheim had illustrated, but it is hard to make out what the effect was. ¹⁸⁶

THEORISING RE-FRAMING AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR: SIR CHARLES HOLMES TO SIR KENNETH CLARK

The onset of the First World War meant that 'Notes on Frames' could have little immediate impact on the appearance of frames and the process of re-framing at the National Gallery. The inter-war years ushered in new attitudes to display and desirable ways of looking at paintings that affected how the reuse of old frames was conceptualised, oscillating between being deployed

110. Masaccio, *The Virgin and Child*, 1426, Room I (present-day Central Hall; looking north), National Gallery Archive, London, in 1928 (nineteenthcentury frame modelled on the original frame surrounding Gentile da Fabriano's *Adoration of the Magi*; see Figs 50 and 87)

for aesthetic and art historical reasons, and frequently being used to do both. Although Sir Charles Holmes (1916–1928), Sir Augustus Moore Daniel (1929–1933) and Sir Kenneth Clark (1934–1945) held particular and individual opinions on these issues, they broadly shared the same attitudes. This continuity across three Directorships was in part maintained because these men worked and socialised in the same circles, came under similar influences (namely Herbert Horne, Roger Fry and Charles Ricketts) and were notably all linked to the establishment and running of the *Burlington Magazine* (*Burlington*).

The first Director of the post-war period was Charles Holmes. Holmes had trained as an artist, studying under Charles Ricketts, with whom he shared a belief in the importance of 'aesthetic' display,; and also the Scottish painter and engraver William Strang (1859-1921). 187 Holmes worked as a critic, sharing a column with Roger Fry in The Athenaeum magazine, prior to co-editing the Burlington with him between 1903 and 1909. Together Holmes and Fry promoted 'aesthetic' design in the Burlington. One example of this taste was their commissioning of Herbert Horne to design the magazine's covers in a mode related to Italian Renaissance book production. 188 From the perspective of understanding Bode's influence on English attitudes to museum and gallery display, it is interesting to note that while Holmes and Fry were working at the Burlington Magazine, Bode had been on its consultative committee. 189 Bode's contribution to the Burlington was described by its editors as 'a true friend to the Magazine from its inception'. 190

Prior to accepting the post of Director of the National Gallery, Holmes had held the same position at the National Portrait Gallery, where he gained a reputation for creating 'artistic' displays. The influence of Fry was continued into Augustus Daniel's Directorship. Daniel had travelled in Italy with the painter, critic and art historian and, as we shall see, shared his belief in the possibility of disinterested looking. ¹⁹¹ Like Daniel, Kenneth Clark also promoted a version of 'disinterested looking', which he associated with 'pure aesthetic sensation'. ¹⁹² Clark retained friendships with both Ricketts and Fry, writing affectionate prefaces to books by both authors. The final testament to the influence of Fry on the

National Gallery is that he and his immediate Bloomsbury circle (Virginia Woolf) were viewed as amongst a group of sufficiently 'suitable contemporaries' to be included in Boris Anrep's mosaics commissioned by the National Gallery between 1928 and 1933.¹⁹³

SIR CHARLES HOLMES: RECONSIDERATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PAINTING AND THE WALL

In 1919, Roger Fry (1866–1934) commented on Holmes' re-arrangement of the Italian 'primitives' at the National Gallery in the Burlington Magazine. Fry praises Holmes for bringing together the 'finest' examples of Italian primitive painting from the respective schools and hanging them against 'dead white' walls interrupted only by a 'deep frieze of blue at ceiling height'. 194 Holmes' autobiography reveals that the white walls and blue frieze were borne out of austerity but happened to align with his ideas on effective display. He wrote, 'Plain paint, and not too much of that, was all the Nation could afford'. 195 Nonetheless, Holmes supported this measure, firstly from a maintenance perspective, as paint did not absorb dust or fade. Secondly, he found that a 'pietra serena effect' of the walls could be created by applying a thin coat of 'gray', with sack, over the strong reds which had been so carefully chosen by Sir Charles Eastlake and Ralph Wornum (the example given was room xxvi). 196 The pietra serena effect allowed Holmes to allude to Renaissance church interiors without recreating them. He himself indicated this by his comment: 'As the Siena Gallery had served as model for white walls of Room I, so the Sacristy of San Lorenzo suggested a scheme'. 197

Holmes also recognised the 'striking resemblance' of the central Dome to a cruciform church and consequently hung the large Italian altarpieces there (Fig. 86). He claimed that 'In this 'church' the altar-pieces found something like their natural setting ... and if the light sometimes was rather dim, that was not inappropriate to religious tradition'. ¹⁹⁸

For Holmes, these vague allusions to Renaissance settings rendered the National Gallery interiors fundamentally different to those in a 'more modern museum' and, as a consequence, might have refocused some critics' attention on frames and framing. 199

Displaying paintings in what was viewed as a suitable, even if it was accidental, environment for Italian Renaissance paintings drew Fry's attention to the state and style of the frames surrounding them. He described the nineteenth-century Neo-Renaissance frames as 'squalid imitation Renaissance frames' and called for them to be replaced, not by frames of the same period and style as the paintings on display, but by either old frames in general or 'something less unlike Florentine sculpture and gilding', a statement which corresponds with Holmes's vague recreations of Renaissance ecclesiastical interiors. 200 Fry drew the readers' particular attention to what he claimed was a 'grotesque' experiment in 'painting and gilding' surrounding Pisanello's 'S. Hubert' (The Vision of Saint Eustace). To understand what he meant by this, we may turn to Herbert Horne. Writing anonymously in the Saturday Review and some twenty years before Fry, Horne penned an article entitled 'The State of the National Gallery' in which he railed against Sir Edward Poynter's (1836-1919) innovations as Director (1894-1904), including framing, notably the recently commissioned frame to The Vision of Saint Eustace by Pisanello (NG1436). He wrote:

Another specimen of his taste has been given to the world in the expensive and fussy little frame in which the magnificent Pisanello, No. 1436, "The Vision of Saint Eustace," is now placed. Nothing could be more unlike the taste and spirit of the time than the frame and the picture. Indeed, the effect of the painting is greatly disturbed by the foolish columns and spotted decoration by which it is now surrounded, suggesting the hand of some junior student at South Kensington. The former frame, poor as it was, in every way was preferable. ²⁰¹

Horne's comments suggest that Government School of Art (South Kensington) sponsored design had become outmoded prior to the beginning of the new century. As we saw in the second chapter this was precisely the origin of the National Gallery's collection of Neo-Renaissance frames, which were intended to look distinctively nineteenth century. Now it was thought that frame,

framing and indeed the immediate gallery setting should reflect 'the taste and spirit' of the time or period in which the painting was painted rather than the one in which it was being displayed.

A concern for Renaissance 'taste and spirit' (*Geist*) was shared by Holmes' colleagues and friends. In 1916, the artist, illustrator, author, aesthete and friend of Sydney Cockerell (who had introduced carpets and flowers into the Fitzwilliam Museum), Charles Ricketts (1866–1931) mused that had he been elected Director of the National Gallery he would have 'put the Italians [Tuscans or Umbrians] on whitewash or grey walls, re-frame them in the gold and azure of the period, to use the dimly polished walnut at times for subsidiary frames for drawings; to place the Venetians on brocade, the Flemings on brocade or stamped leather, the Dutch on this or on whitewash, the Spaniards in black frames on grey walls ... to group the Bellini movement together with the Mantegna ... to give effect to certain gems, to give Michelangelo his mouldings, and to Rembrandt the frames he has painted ... and to slowly mould the place from a Board of Works aspect to that of a palace'. ²⁰³

In Ricketts' statement there are no less than five references to re-framing, all of which suggest an underlying taste for frames either with a notion of school and/or those associated with a specific artist. The phrase 'to give Michelangelo his mouldings' suggests that the rupture of panels from their original display contexts was viewed as depriving the artwork of a vital component – its frame, whether imagined or actual and might explain why there was renewed focus on appropriate approaches to re-framing. It was Ricketts' hope to display these frames and paintings in environments that were an approximation of what he believed to have been the original display conditions of a given school, within the environment of a palace or church. It is also revealing that he identified the Board of Works (Office of Works) as conditioning the current appearance of the National Gallery.²⁰⁴ I assume that Ricketts was using 'Board of Works' as a shorthand for a practical and cheap type of architecture and ornament that did not relate to the original viewing conditions of the paintings on display or a complementary aesthetic. Indeed Acton Smee Ayrton, the newly appointed First Commissioner of the Board of Works, who confessed to having no knowledge of art, saw his role as preventing 'people who had fancies' indulging them 'at the public expense'.²⁰⁵

A sympathy for old frames transformed attitudes towards Neo-Renaissance frames. Holmes, Fry and Ricketts all indicated publicly and in print, a desire to avoid the violent ruptures created through (to borrow Benson's term) 'anachronistic frames' clashing with interiors which, to varying degrees, were reminiscent of Renaissance settings. Indeed as the walls of the National Gallery became closer approximations of Renaissance interiors, a pressure was exerted on the frames surrounding its paintings more closely to resemble original framing solutions. In actual terms this attitude to display meant that the panel was inextricably and indistinguishably linked to the gallery walls by its frame, emphasising its sense of belonging.

This new pressure refocused attention on the quality of frames as objects too, as well as their relationship to paintings. It will be shown that there were moments in the years between 1929 and 1934 when these twin aims conflicted with one another, which reflected the wider issue of the agency behind re-framing decisions—Trustees, Director and increasingly specialised frame dealers.

QUESTIONING 'PERIOD' STYLE RE-FRAMING: SIR AUGUSTUS DANIEL AND OLD FRAMES

Prior to becoming the Director of the National Gallery, Augustus Daniel, Holmes' successor had worked as Assistant Director of the British School at Rome (1906–1907) and acted as a Trustee of the National Gallery between 1925 and 1929. Although he held the Directorship of the National Gallery during the years of the Great Depression, 1928–1932, Daniel had considerable impact on actual framing policy as well as making major acquisitions, including the *Wilton Diptych* (NG4451) and *The Vendramin Family* (NG4452). ²⁰⁶ The archival references to frames and framing made in Annual Reports and Board Minutes during Daniel's Directorship reveal the important role of the Gallery's Trustees as arbiters of taste and the growing importance of specialist frame dealers in this period.

From the very beginning of Daniel's Directorship there was de-

monstrable interest in re-framing, which is underlined by a Minute in the South Kensington Board Report. The Keeper of Woodwork at the South Kensington Museum who had specialist knowledge of English furniture, Harold Clifford Smith (1876–1966) recorded that he had met Daniel on 3 June 1931 to discuss the value of an English eighteenth-century frame. He continued: 'I had an opportunity while I was there [at the National Gallery] of examining a number of frames with Mr Daniel ... The National Gallery, it is interesting to know, has lately made a very considerable advance, & acquired a number of fine old frames for the collection'. ²⁰⁷

In the following paragraphs, I shall demonstrate that under Daniel's Directorship, Benson's recommendation that paintings should be re-framed in a frame of the same date and place of origin, or a copy of it, was generally ignored. Instead, old frames were selected according to their quality as objects and thus their suitability for the National Gallery as a national institution and, secondly, as a means of facilitating 'disinterested looking'.

Focusing on the quality of frames as objects was not peculiar to the National Gallery during this period and acquisitions like this were noticed. There is a document in the National Gallery archive dating from 1930–1933 in which the new frames acquired by the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam were praised. It reads: 'Dr. Schmidt-Degener has obtained a great number of gilt carved frames ... The carving is elaborate but the frames on the whole are narrow, rarely double swept and often of the type with a torus carrying leaves or flowers parallel to the direction of the moulding'. ²⁰⁸

The author assumed that labels had not been attached to these frames to avoid disfiguring them, suggesting that they were viewed as precious objects rather than a convenient location to present art historical information.

The most important advance in terms of re-framing policy under Daniel and indeed for the issue in general at the National Gallery was his 'Memorandum on Frames' (1929) written for the Board of Trustees. The stated aim of the document was to identify poor and good frames on display at the National Gallery in order to draw attention to the importance of re-framing paintings in 'quality' frames, the definition of which becomes clear as we read the document.



111. Alesso Baldovinetti, Portrait of a Lady, 1465, National Gallery, London (original frame)

Indeed, a concern with 'quality' runs throughout. Firstly, Daniel considered how the National Gallery could obtain frames of good quality. He suggested that an appeal for frames, which he believed 'might well be of exceptional quality', be made to the 'friends' of the Gallery. The Memorandum also identified the Victoria and Albert Museum as a potential source of frames, although it was acknowledged that they could not be cut down and would therefore be difficult to make fit. Finally, it was suggested that the National Gallery organise a special exhibition on frames 'to advertise our interest in and need for good frames'. There is no evidence



to suggest that such an exhibition was ever staged. But the idea of displaying empty frames at the National Gallery was an innovative one, demonstrating a real interest in their qualities as objects. Neither could it have been coincidental that the first exhibition dedicated to frames had been held in Berlin in 1929 and then transferred to Paris. Although Bode died before the exhibition had opened, the catalogue to it contained his highly influential article on the development of frame styles between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries that had first appeared in *Pan* in 1898. In 1929 the National Gallery's Trustees authorised staff members to travel abroad

112. Piero della Francesca, The Baptism of Christ, probably about 1437-45, National Gallery, London (Neo-Renaissance frame)

113. Workshop of Sandro Botticelli, The Virgin and Child with a Pomegranate, probably about 1480–1500, National Gallery, London (nineteenth-century frame, inside moulding only)



for the explicit purpose of studying 'new methods of exhibition' and so it is not inconceivable that Daniel may have seen the exhibition. The exhibition catalogue is not in the National Gallery Library but was acquired by the National Art Library and British Library and therefore would have been available in London for scholars to consult.

The hitherto unremarked upon 'Memorandum on Frames' provides us with a greater understanding of what contemporaries meant by the term 'unsuitable frame' and indicates the extent to which the phrase's meaning had changed since Benson had used it in 1913. Daniel used the term in two different ways, firstly to denote a poor reproduction of a specific frame type and, secondly, to mean a frame that was not intrinsically bad but was unsuitable for the painting.²¹³ Moreover Daniel did not consider all 'period'



114. Lorenzo di Credi, Virgin and Child, about 1480-5, National Gallery, London (Neo-Renaissance frame)

(I imagine he means old) picture frames to be good, arguing that they could be both 'fine' and 'poor'. ²¹⁴

Although Daniel examined the frames surrounding the Italian, Flemish, Dutch, French, German and English Schools, I will focus on the Italian examples, which are most pertinent to the discussion. Amongst the 'good' frames Daniel identified were those to Alesso Baldovinetti's *Portrait of a Lady* (NG758) (Fig. III), which is hardly surprising given that it is an 'engaged' frame with a worn appearance, and the 'modern pattern' frames surrounding *Christ surrounded by Angels* by Fra Angelico (NG663) and the *Baptism of Christ* by Piero della Francesca (NG665) (Fig. II2). The Director identified unsuitable frames around 'School of Botticelli' *Madonna and Child* (NG2906) (Fig. II3) Lorenzo di Credi, *Madonna and Child* (NG593) (Fig. II4), Filippo Lippi, *Madonna and Child* (NG3424)

115. Neo-Renaissance frame for Fra Filippo Lippi and Workshop, Virgin and Child, about 1450-60, National Gallery, London



(Fig. 115), Filippino Lippi, *Saint Francis in Glory* (NG598), Piero della Francesca, *Nativity* (NG908) (Fig. 116) and Raphael, *Procession to Calvary* (NG2919) (Fig. 117). The selections above demonstrate that Daniel made clear categorical distinctions between the large Neo-Renaissance altarpiece/tabernacle frames, which had been commissioned in small numbers (the three San Giobbe types being the largest order) in the 1880s, and those that had been produced in large numbers by Henry Critchfield.²¹⁵

The Board Minutes of 1929 reveal that Daniel's 'Memorandum on Frames' was approved. However the Chairman of the Board maintained that steps should be taken to avoid 'conscious "Period" style' re-framing. ²¹⁶ The Chairman's comment must be viewed as part of a wider critique of period rooms, which was made evident in the quotation from Proust cited previously. This attitude echoed Daniel's suggestion that a picture could look better in a frame from



116. Piero della Francesca, The Nativitγ, early 1480s, National Gallery, London (Neo-Renaissance tabernacle frame)



117. Raphael, *The Procession to Calvary* (bottom left), about 1504-5, Room XXIX (present-day Gallery 12; looking west), National Gallery, London, in 1923 (Neo-Renaissance frame)

a different period to its own if it was of a sufficiently high quality. Ultimately, 'Memorandum on Frames' advocated a far freer and more experimental re-framing policy than did Benson's 'Notes on Frames', with 'both frames of new design or of old design' being considered and the view aired that the London atmosphere should be allowed to patinate frames rather than deploying artificial aging strategies. What Daniel shared with his predecessors was a desire to bring the frame together with the panel it surrounded in a harmonious fashion, a process I believe was inextricably linked to facilitating the visitor's aesthetic experience. This observation demonstrates that the creation of 'harmony' and 'wholeness' between the painting and frame was no longer perceived to be simply a stylistic question, as for Guggenheim, but came to encompass age and quality.

Daniel was authorised to spend up to £500 from the Lewis Fund on purchasing, very specifically, 'old' frames. Furthermore, 'it was resolved that further steps should be considered for the acquisition of old frames suited to the Gallery' (rather than the painting). The Trustees' commitment to purchasing frames was reiterated in 1931. The Board Minutes recorded that the 'campaign for re-framing' should be developed and the Keeper alerted the Board to the fact that the Treasury had increased the amount the Director could spend on incidental expenses, specifically frames. It seems somewhat paradoxical that despite the importance of frames they were still treated as 'incidental expenses'. When the Treasury attempted to reduce the frame budget the Trustees refused, maintaining that the 1930–1931 funding levels would have to be sustained for 'several years' to improve the quality of frames on display at the National Gallery. ²²¹

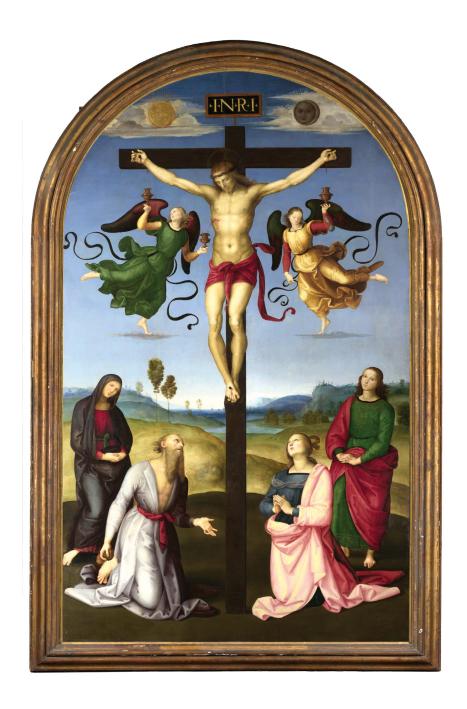
Clearly the policy had some impetus for in 1933 (incidentally the final year of Daniel's Directorship), it was announced that 85 pictures had been re-framed in five years. ²²² It is interesting to note that an article detailing recent conservation at the National Gallery in the *London Evening News* for 1935, reported that 34 frames had been repaired or replaced in that year, indicating that re-framing was an issue deemed worthy of being communicated to a public beyond specialist publications. ²²³ As we saw in an earlier part of this chapter,



the National Gallery had received frames as gifts in the past. However, these had been offered fairly sporadically. After 'Memorandum on Frames', gifts of frames increased. National Gallery Trustee Lord Lee of Fareham presented four frames to the National Gallery in 1929, ²²⁴ Baron Giorgio Treves de Bonfili gifted two Italian frames in 1930²²⁵ and in 1933 Samuel Courtauld presented a Louis XVI carved frame to the Gallery, which was used to frame *Portrait of a Man in his Thirties* by Frans Hals (NG1251). ²²⁶ Roger Fry found what he thought was a 'contemporary' frame for Titian's *The Vendramin Family* (NG4452) (Fig. 118) in Sicily. Although the frame is a seventeenth-century leaf-twist frame, its acquisition demonstrates a genuine attempt to find good quality frames of the same date and place of origin as the painting. Moreover, the leaf-twist frame resembles a Roman palace type, which would not be entirely inappropriate for a painting that once hung in a palace. ²²⁷ It seems

118. Titian and Workshop, *The Vendramin Family*, about 1540-5, National Gallery, London (seventeenth-century leaf-twist frame)

119. Raphael, The Mond Crucifixion (The Crucified Christ with the Virgin Mary, Saints and Angels), about 1502-3, National Gallery, London (twentiethcentury moulding frame)



that individuals would also offer to pay for the specific re-framing of a painting. For example in 1929, Lord Melchett (Alfred Moritz Mond, son of Dr. Ludwig Mond, who had bequeathed twenty-four paintings to the National Gallery in 1909) offered to finance the re-framing of *The Mond Crucifixion* by Raphael (NG3943). He was subsequently invited to consider alternative designs for the frame alongside the Director.²²⁸ A seventeenth-century style moulding frame was selected that references the wooden mouldings which often connected panels with stone frames in the chapel context.



120. Copy after Raphael's Mond Crucifixion (original carved stone frame), Church of San Domenico, Città di Castello

This frame makes no reference to the original stone frame for the altarpiece in the church of San Domenico at Città di Castello, even though this frame was known (Figs. 119–120).²²⁹

Attempts to obtain frames from the South Kensington Museum proved unsuccessful apparently because students at the Royal College of Art were studying them. ²³⁰ The National Gallery was therefore forced to buy frames and looked specifically to acquire large collections of old frames. For example, on 10 May 1927 Sir Robert Witt reported to the Board that he had been informed of

a 'miscellaneous collection of old frames' which was 'available for sale in Italy'. ²³¹ It was subsequently noted that the frames were not in fact old, but modern reproductions and thus of no interest to the National Gallery. ²³²

The National Gallery was also approached by frame dealers with re-framing suggestions for its paintings. In the Framing Department there is a folder of sixteen re-framing proposals provided by the Berlin frame-dealers Pygmalion (who had also provided frames for Bode) during the 1930s. 233 All of their proposals were for Italian paintings including works by Botticelli, Costa, Credi, Michelangelo and Verrocchio. Pygmalion's re-framing suggestions show a greater concern for pairing paintings with frames of the same date and origin than the more aesthetic approach advocated by Daniel. To date, I have found no evidence to suggest that any of these frames were ever purchased. However, in 1934, the National Gallery purchased frames from the German art dealer Paul Cassirer (1871-1926). As a picture dealer Cassirer had promoted the Berlin Secession, French Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, the latter groups being known to have used old frames for economic reasons.²³⁴ Cassirer was also a journal editor resurrecting the periodical Pan in 1910, in which Bode published his seminal article on frames. It becomes apparent in the evidence arising from this transaction that the National Gallery's Trustees at this time placed great emphasis on acquiring 'genuine' old frames and not copies of them.

The Board Minutes narrate that Cassirer offered his collection of 300 frames, which had been purchased in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century, to the National Gallery. Ralph Edwardes of the Victoria and Albert Museum was sent to inspect the frames and confirm that they were genuine, demonstrating that there was insufficient expertise in the subject at the National Gallery to do so. ²³⁵ The Trustees decided that the whole collection could be purchased but any unwanted frames sold. However, due to a lack of funds only 13 frames were bought for a total sum of £,500. ²³⁶

Most of the frames the National Gallery acquired from Cassirer were for paintings then supposed to be from the Italian School. Cassirer's invoice outlines the date and origin of the frames, which



121. Dirk Bouts, *The Entombment*, probably 1450s, National Gallery, London (Italian sixteenth-century frame)

were largely incorrect, although these mistakes are revealing. A Venetian frame of 1500 was purchased for *The Entombment* by Dirk Bouts (NG664) (Fig. 121), which was then ascribed to the Venetian early sixteenth-century painter Vincenzo Catena. A frame described as a sixteenth-century gold 'Schelle' frame was selected for Mantegna's *Agony in the Garden* (NG1417) (Fig. 122), while Italian sixteenth-century frames were chosen for Salvoldo's *Mary Magdalen* (NG1031), 'a Michelangelo' (I believe he was referring to the *Manchester Madonna* NG809), and a painting described as 'Greco'. It is interesting to note that Italian frames (a pair of Venetian sixteenth-century frames and a Brescian frame of the sixteenth century) were purchased from Cassirer without particular paintings in mind. The pairings of frames and paintings outlined in the invoice demonstrates a desire broadly to re-frame painting in frames from the same country and date, but in a far less specifically tailored way



122. Andrea Mantegna, The Agony in the Garden, about 1455-6, National Gallery, London (Italian seventeenthcentury frame)

than Benson had recommended.²³⁷

Very few 'Cassirer' frames are still on display at the National Gallery. Louisa Davey shows that the Cassirer frame to Mantegna's *Agony in the Garden* (NG1471.2) (Fig. 122) is an original seventeenth-century Venetian frame that was heavily re-gilded and re-gessoed. The frame, which is clearly not a Renaissance frame, must have been selected on account of its quality, and the fact that the repeat guilloche ornament would be easy to adapt. In tone and ornament the Mantegna frame is very similar to the seventeenth-century Italian frame with guilloche frieze, which was also purchased from Cassirer, and now surrounds *The Virgin and Child with Saints Paul and Jerome* by Bartolommeo Vivarini (NG284) (Fig. 123). There does not appear to be a deliberate affinity between the



123. Bartolomeo Vivarini, The Virgin and Child with Saints Paul and Jerome, 1460s, National Gallery, London (Italian seventeenth-century frame)

Cassirer frames and the paintings they surround, although it should be remembered that when they were purchased, the frames were thought to be about a century older.

Although a number of frames must have been specifically commissioned in this period, there is only substantial archival evidence for one, the Pistoia *Santa Trinità* Altarpiece 1455-60 by Francesco Pesellino and Fra Filippo Lippi and workshop, commissioned by the Compagnia dei Preti in Pistoia (NG727, 3162, 3230, 4428, L15). ²³⁹ The five fragments of the main field, acquired piecemeal over a long period, were reunited in 1929 necessitating a new frame, which did not take into account the four predella panels by Filippo Lippi and his workshop which entered the National Gallery's collection almost a decade later in 1937. ²⁴⁰ However, in

1929, in an article entitled 'Completed by the Kaiser's panel: our Pesellino masterpiece' the altarpiece was described as complete 'at last'. The only missing part was thought to be that at the bottom right of the main panel, showing Saint Jerome and Saint Zeno. ²⁴¹

The decision to frame the panels in an all'antica frame reveals a general and recent acceptance that they had originally been part of a pala rather than polyptych.²⁴² Letters indicate that Daniel worked closely with the frame-makers, Duveen, to reach an effective design for the new all'antica frame. The written description of the first frame design describes a tabernacle form with arabesque ornament to the pilasters and a decorated frieze. From this description it seems that the proposed frame would have been in keeping with the all'antica frames commissioned in the 1880s, which were suggestive of authentic all'antica frames but not based on specific models. On receiving the drawing of the frame, the Paris branch of Duveen suggested that 'the lampadaires (i.e. arabesque ornament) at the sides' and the angels on the top of the frieze should be removed. Duveen disapproved of any 'excess of carving' and suggested instead that the frame should be painted rather than ornamented.²⁴³ Daniel's discussion regarding the frame with a Trustee on August 1 1929 raised revealing concerns. The writer asks:

What do you think about the enclosed letter from Duveen? The suggestion to eliminate the carved decoration from the pilasters and frieze agrees with our own ideas provided that some substitute is provided that will prevent the frame looking bald. This I imagine would be done by their suggestion of a painted design in gold on blue which they mention. ²⁴⁴

By December the design was once again reconsidered. Duveen still thought it was rather 'finicky' and late in style for a painting of the period of Filippo Lippi. Duveen suggested an alternative design based on a frame in Santo Spirito (that surrounding Cosimo Rosselli's *Madonna Enthroned between Two Saints* (1482) (Fig. 124)), which was 'simpler and steadier' and more 'in keeping' with a Pesellino altarpiece. ²⁴⁵ This comment suggests a genuine desire to create a frame that was sympathetic to the painting it enclosed and,



124. Cosimo Rosselli, Madonna Enthroned between Two Saints, 1482. Basilica di Santo Spirito, Florence (original frame)

in this case, its early date as a Renaissance pala. The Santo Spirito frame model was the final design selected (Fig. 2). This commission is not fundamentally different to the new frame designed for the Masaccio in 1917, in as much as it was conceived independently of Guggenheim's *Le cornici*. Instead, the use of painted decoration rather than carved ornament marks a distinct shift in taste, echoing the effect of Holmes' simply painted interiors, but clearly only incidentally, if Duveen was making the decisions. Furthermore, only one version of this frame was made, demonstrating how re-framing in this period was concerned with creating connections with individual artworks.

How might Daniel's re-framing strategies correspond with how he conceived the process of looking at paintings in the Gallery? It is unusual that as a Director of the National Gallery Daniel only published one book (in fact the result of a lecture), but the subject matter is revealing. In *Some approaches to a judgment in painting* (1940) Daniel maintained that paintings had to be looked at individually, not for the purposes of study as Eastlake might have argued in *How to Observe*, but so that they could be properly 'felt'. He wrote:

Each individual work should be regarded as a problem. It is a problem not for thought but for feeling not for mere feeling but for the feeling for those experienced in art whether artist or amateur. It is only gradually that the object becomes distinguished and that it is possessed in details. Only after the distinguished object is thus possessed and felt as a series of concordant elements and felt with pleasure, delight or awe, only then is valid the judgement of excellence.²⁴⁶

Daniel's statement has much in common with Fry's formalist criticism, which as Curtin argues was indebted to Kant. ²⁴⁷ Fry viewed life as distinct from art experienced in the everyday, writing: 'Art, then, is an expression and a stimulus of this imaginative life, which is separated from actual life by the absence of responsive action'. ²⁴⁸

Although Fry believed that art was capable of arousing emotions, he also feared that the public might not be able to appreciate its purely aesthetic qualities. ²⁴⁹ This judgement was reiterated by Daniel who lamented the fact that visitors automatically wanted to make links between what was depicted and reality, writing:

The one asks: 'What is that?', 'It is Dutch boors in a cellar' or 'It is The Madonna and Child', replies the other. The mind has leapt past the picture to reality ... the picture has been used merely as a sign and has not been regarded in and for itself. It is little more than such perception of a door as is needed to turn the handle and enter the next room.²⁵⁰

This attitude or way of looking is confirmed by Kenneth Clark's observation that Daniel looked for 'pleasure, disinterestedly'. ²⁵¹ Indeed Clark recalled how Daniel would 'look very closely for a few minutes, and then would execute a little war dance of satisfaction ... pure enjoyment'. ²⁵² He said that he 'disliked conclusions because they limited the freedom, and, ultimately, the disinterestedness of mind ... He would not teach, nor write, nor lecture'. ²⁵³ Arguably, good quality old frames could establish an equilibrium with the paintings they surrounded by creating the illusion of an un-ruptured whole. When the two elements (picture and frame) successfully combined, 'life' could be pushed out, facilitating the visitors' aesthetic experience.

SIR KENNETH CLARK: FRAMING, CONTEXT AND INTUITION

The concept of disinterestedness created a crucial continuum between Daniel's Directorship and that of Kenneth Clark, although Clark also argued for a contextual approach to looking, which is reflected in his statement that he was an 'aesthete and art historian'. Prior to his appointment as Director of the National Gallery, Clark had studied with Bernard Berenson, ²⁵⁴ organised the Royal Academy Italian Paintings exhibition (1929) and been Keeper at the Ashmolean Museum, which also had a policy of collecting old frames. ²⁵⁵ Despite this experience, Clark admitted in his autobiography that he was ill-prepared to undertake some of the duties associated with the position of Director. He wrote: 'I knew nothing of administration, nothing of finance or fund raising, ... I was an aesthete and artcertain rooms'. ²⁵⁶

In his autobiography Clark recalled an incident which indicates the level of involvement he had with framing and the fact that his re-framing choices were primarily motivated by aesthetic concerns rather than more 'scientific' ones:

I was in the English room in the National Gallery, trying a new frame on Turner's *Interior at Petworth*. It had always seemed to me crushed by its heavy gold moulding, and I had been conned



into having a silvery frame specially made for it, which would 'show up' the red and yellow colours of the painting. It looked horrible.²⁵⁷

In 1938 Clark selected six frames from the Victoria and Albert Museum to re-frame some pictures from the National Gallery's collections. In the correspondence relating to this matter it was noted that the number was low because other suitable frames could not be 'cut about'. ²⁵⁸ The comment suggests that the frames were valued as objects and preserved as such. The South Kensington frames included an important Sienese carved, gilded and blue painted cassetta frame of 1500-1525 (7816-1862) which Penny suggests was made by the workshop of Antonio Barile.²⁵⁹ Initially, the frame was used to re-frame Christ appearing to the Magdalen (Noli me Tangere) by Titian of 1510-1525 (NG270), but was subsequently extended to accommodate the larger Madonna and Child by Sebastiano del Piombo (NG1450) (Fig. 19). The fact that the frame was moved between paintings suggests that it was selected because of its quality as a frame rather than because it was appropriate for a specific painting, highlighting the role intuition played in re-framing decisions at this time in the Gallery's history. Moreover, the frame was altered to accommodate the new painting, suggesting that once it (the frame) was viewed as being part of the National Gallery collection, the same strict conservation requirements in place at the Victoria and Albert Museum no longer applied. Nevertheless, the frame does effectively contain the image without overwhelming it. Moreover the combination of the contrasting blue and gold in the frame complement Sebastiano's rendering of chiaroscuro. A black-painted and partially gilded Tuscan Mannerist frame was used to frame Saint Jerome in a landscape by Cima da Conegliano of about 1500-10 (NG1120) (Fig. 125). The frame is representative of high-quality Italian frame-making but is some fifty-years younger than the panel. Furthermore, the flanking caryatids seem inappropriate for a depiction of Saint Jerome. As the frame shows no evidence of being cut, it would appear that Clark's decision was motivated by more pragmatic concerns. Understanding the motivating factors behind the re-framing 125. Cima da Conegliano, *Saint Jerome in a Landscape*, about 1500-10, National Gallery, London (black painted and partially gilded Tuscan Mannerist frame)

choices I have discussed can partially be reached through appreciation of Clark's attitude towards aesthetics and art history. Clark encouraged viewers to look 'in such a way as to intensify and prolong the pleasure it gives one', 260 a sentiment which he confessed was indebted to Fry's 'doctrine of detachment'. He instructed visitors to look at the painting as a whole first, feeling the aesthetic sensation created by the tones, shapes and colours in the painting. After examining the painting as a whole, Clark recommended that the visitor turn to 'historical criticism', by which he meant a consideration of the 'facts of the artist's life', before allowing himself to become 'saturated with the work'. This way of looking implicated frames and framing, because (in theory) they could work to facilitate the viewer's aesthetic experience and could also provide a sense of historical context.

In 'The Aesthetics of Restoration', Clark argued that it was desirable to use conservation as a means of bringing, as far as possible, a painting back to its 'original condition'. ²⁶⁴ To some degree he also wanted paintings to be displayed in an approximation of their original display environments. Clark was confident in his knowledge of what Renaissance interiors would have looked like, describing Bode's period rooms as 'fake' on the basis that, 'We know that a Renaissance room did not look like that'. ²⁶⁵ Instead, in his ideal gallery, Clark stated that he would have placed the Venetian paintings in richly decorated rooms and the early Florentine School in 'severe and simple rooms'. ²⁶⁶ In many senses selecting frames which were evocative of sumptuous Venetian decoration, or of Florentine restraint, was a means of creating a context for the dislocated paintings, without creating a 'period room'.

Ultimately though, Clark's attitude to re-framing was similar to the intuitive approach he used in his re-hanging, where he sought to bring out the visual dynamics between two paintings, rather than restricting himself to a more connoisseurial approach based on schools and chronology.²⁶⁷ His relational attitude to composing collections comes out clearly in his autobiography when he discusses how he liked, as a child, composing groups of objects and seeing how they changed in relation to one another.²⁶⁸

SIR PHILIP HENDY: THE SURVIVAL OF OLD FRAMES

Despite the efforts of Holmes, Daniel and Clark, the state of framing at the National Gallery was still deemed to be poor in 1947. A newspaper article of that year reads: 'On going around the National Gallery the other day, I was struck by some of the shocking frames in which masterpieces ... are forcibly imprisoned'.²⁶⁹

This comment suggests that a clear discrepancy between the quality of the paintings or 'masterpieces' at the National Gallery and the frames they were surrounded by had been noted and that frames were viewed (once again) as incarcerating their contents. Criticism of the state of framing also took place within the Gallery walls. There is documentation in the National Gallery archive that reveals that its Trustees encouraged re-framing because they were unhappy with the condition of the frames on display or found them ugly, regardless of their style or age. In a letter to William Gibson dated 25 March 1958, John Witt summarised the findings of a tour of the National Gallery undertaken with Sir Richard Brindsley Ford ('Brindsley') (1908-1999) to inspect frames and labels. Witt made a list of frames which 'really hit us badly in the eye as being ugly or in poor order'. ²⁷⁰ The letter and the list of frames were also sent to the Gallery's new Director, Sir Philip Hendy. Witt's complaints included chipping to frames (namely paintings from the Turner Bequest). Frames that were 'ghastly' included those surrounding Monks and Holy Women Mourning over the Dead Christ after Massimo Stanzione (NG3401) and An Extensive Landscape with Houses by Philips Koninck (NG4251) which was described as a 'Frame of real squalor such as would shame the poorest French provincial Gallery. New frame wanted'. 271 The observation made in relation to the frame surrounding Bellini's Madonna of the Pomegranate read, 'Pink looks unsuitable against balustrade in picture. Is the pink not a later addition and could it not be removed?'272 These comments highlight that, for the Trustees at least, frames were deemed inappropriate to the National Gallery as a leading institution on account of their specific condition or colour rather than by more complex connoisseurial concerns. But, as I will show, the arguments concerning appropriate frames were to become more nuanced as the

results of the renewed picture cleaning campaign became evident following the end of the Second World War. These more complex concerns were voiced by the first Post-War Director of the National Gallery, Sir Philip Hendy (1945–1968).

Hendy's appointment as Director of the National Gallery was indicative of the increasing professionalisation of the institution. Not only did he have previous museum experience, but he would also become President of the International Council of Museums (1959–1965). The professionalisation was also borne out in what *The Times* described as his overhauling the National Gallery catalogues, so they reflected 'accurate and modern expertise'. ²⁷³

Hendy's previous appointments included having been Assistant to the Keeper at the Wallace Collection (1923-1927), ²⁷⁴ curator of paintings for the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (1930–1933)²⁷⁵ and Director of the Leeds City Art Gallery (combined with Temple Newsam) from 1934. As an art historian, Hendy focused on the early Renaissance, publishing monographs on Piero della Francesca and Giovanni Bellini. 276 These appointments and publications highlight Hendy's knowledge of furniture and paintings, and I would suggest these interests came together in his restoration of the historical interiors at Temple Newsam, Leeds and the creation of period rooms in museums.²⁷⁷ The correspondent for the Yorkshire Post observed on the reopening of Temple Newsam that 'from today one will enter once more by the stone porch into the great hall. This is in the centre of the South Wing in which was carried out what must be one of the earliest conscious schemes of period decoration'.278

The number of references to frames in the Director's Reports dating from Hendy's Directorship at Leeds indicate the important role they played in his period displays and his reliance on, and familiarity with, the increasingly specialist London frame-trade to do this. For example, on 23 March 1936 Hendy recorded that he 'took *Dead Birds* by Weenix to Spiller's and found a suitable frame', which would have been an antique one as this is what Spiller's specialised in. Hendy also used the firm of Bourlet, who made reproduction frames, to re-frame a painting by Schwanfelder. The intrinsic importance of frames and framing would remain with

Hendy throughout his career. For example, in July 1953 he visited the recently remodelled Palazzo Bianco in Genoa, in which the architect, Franco Albini, had removed non-original frames. In his diary entry for that day, Hendy lamented seeing these paintings swinging without frames from steel rods.²⁸¹

RE-FRAMING AND CONSERVATION

During the War the National Gallery's collection had been removed to a quarry in Manod in Wales for safe storage. While the paintings were in Manod the National Gallery's first professional conservator, Helmut Ruhemann cleaned a number of them resulting in controversy when they returned to London. In Mollie Butler's *August and Rab: A Memoir*, it was noted that Hendy: 'incurred much criticism when he started the idea of having the pictures cleaned. It was said that he was under the influence of a German crank who persuaded him to do this'. 283

The newly cleaned paintings were shown in an exhibition organised by Hendy entitled 'An Exhibition of Cleaned Pictures' (1947). The controversy which the exhibition excited necessitated justification of the National Gallery's picture cleaning policies and resulted in the establishment of the Weaver Committee in 1947, named after the Cambridge chemist Dr. J. Weaver who led the investigations. The committee concluded that it was necessary to remove and repair 'accretions' because they were disfiguring.²⁸⁴ In an article entitled 'On Cleaning an Old Master' Hendy explained the rationale behind the cleaning campaign to readers of *The Listener*. His article focused on the cleaning of Titian's The Virgin Suckling the Infant Christ (NG 3948), , namely the removal of what were considered nineteenth-century varnishes. Hendy maintained that the effects of cleaning were in this picture the shadows are becoming infinite once more; and in them the forms of this girl and her child, so real and yet impalpable, are beginning to shimmer again, as they have not done for many years, much as they did before Titian's failing eyes'. 285

It would seem that Hendy, like Clark, wanted paintings to be

displayed as near as possible to their original condition. This had major implications for re-framing, resulting in an attempt to relocate the panels in the time in which they were painted.

We can glean from the Annual Report for the years 1962–1964, in which both frames and re-framing were discussed as a discrete category for the first time, that conservation was directly linked to re-framing. In this section the author of the report argued (incorrectly) that re-framing was almost always a direct consequence of picture cleaning or 'refreshing', but that it had simply never been noted in previous Annual Reports. He claimed that after being 'refreshed' paintings threw off their 'drab khaki uniform' to reveal tonal nuances and modelling which 'clashed' with their previous frames, making even frames of a recent date appear old-fashioned, accentuating their 'coarseness of bulk and of ornament' and 'monotony of accent'. It was argued that after cleaning, a painting should be re-framed in a frame that was 'contemporary' (but not necessarily close in regional origin) with it, in order to complement the new appearance of its surface.

Attempting to harmonise the picture surface with the frame represented a departure from Daniel, who had based his re-framing policy on the quality of the picture frames or from Holmes, who had sought stylistic unity between frame and painting and accidentally the wider Gallery setting. Indeed (once again) it would appear that during times of controversy, ensuring that the painting and frame appeared as a whole became imperative, just as I demonstrated had been the case in relation to the Curzon Enquiry, 1914. Unlike Benson, Hendy selected 'suitable contemporary frames' based on capturing a general *Zeitgeist* of the period in which the painting was painted and creating harmonious unions, an approach that also reflected his attitude to hanging.

RE-FRAMING PROGRESS AND ADMINISTRATION

The rapid progress of re-framing was reflected in the large numbers of frames that were deemed redundant by Hendy. On 27 December 1950, he wrote to Edward Playfair (1909-1999) at the Treasury,

asking his advice on the disposal of some one hundred 'obsolete frames'. ²⁸⁸ In response, Playfair suggested that the frames should be offered for their scrap value to the Slade and other art schools. ²⁸⁹ On obtaining estimates of the frames' value from specialist dealers, it transpired that they were worth more than scrap and sold to Wiggins. A further tranche numbering 'eighty or ninety' of the National Gallery's frames were sold to Wiggins in 1957. ²⁹⁰ These archival references indicate that the value of the National Gallery's frames shifted according to the taste of the beholder and to more general audiences.

Re-framing in large numbers required a functioning administrative structure and sufficient financial support. An in-house frame workshop was established at the National Gallery in 1946 to allow adaptations to take place on site under 'master craftsman', W. Legge. ²⁹¹ The rate of re-framing is reflected in the appointment of additional staff. Initially, the department was staffed by a 'Master Craftsman' and an assistant. By 1965, the department would employ five members of staff. ²⁹² Trustees also attempted to encourage individuals to pay for new frames. A letter from C.A. Partridge to Hendy dated 7 February 1958 began:

I should like you to take me round the Gallery and point out which you consider the pictures with the most pressing claim for a new dress [i.e. frames] ... Armed with this knowledge I should casually suggest to certain people ... in the course of our perambulations ... what they could do to enhance the lovely paintings and what recognition they would receive.²⁹³

In 1947, a fund for re-framing in 'a style more or less contemporary with the pictures' and 'one that 'their authors would not have been surprised to see' (stated by the National Gallery, not Barber)²⁹⁴ was bequeathed by Ellen Lucy Barber. These re-framing motivations mirrored almost exactly what Hendy sought to achieve through cleaning the surfaces of the paintings.²⁹⁵ Evidence in the Board Minutes shows that when the Barber Bequest funds were depleted the Trustees found an alternative source of revenue from the Horn Fund.²⁹⁶ The Horn Fund account book



126. Antonio del Pollaiolo and Piero del Pollaiolo, The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, completed 1475, National Gallery, London (twentieth-century all'antica frame)

reveals a number of payments to dedicated frame dealers who had a self-generated in-depth knowledge of the subject, as well as stocks of frames. These dealers included Arnold Wiggins and Sons (London), Pynappel (Berlin), Nuto Buccarelli (Florence), Henry Heydenryk (Amsterdam, author of *The Art and History of Frames: An Inquiry into the Enhancement of Paintings* (1963) and *The Right Frame: A Consideration of the Right and Wrong Methods of Framing Pictures*) and F. A. Pollak (London).

The Barber Fund facilitated the 'successful' re-framing of the impressively scaled *Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* by the Pollaiuolo





brothers (NG293) (Fig. 126) in a frame made by Wiggins in 1951, Mantegna's The Virgin and Child with the Magdalen and Saint John the Baptist (NG274) (Fig. 1), The Entombment by Michelangelo (NG790) (Fig. 127 and 127a) and Titian's Portrait of a Man (NG1944) (Fig. 128). 297 In 1946, F.A. Pollak framed the Mantegna and Michelangelo in impressive sixteenth-century frames. Michelangelo's Entombment (NG790) is an unfinished work of 1501, thought to have been commissioned for the Basilica of Sant'Agostino in Rome.²⁹⁸ Alexander Nagel argues that it was intended as the altarpiece for the first chapel on the left for an altar dedicated to the Pietà. 299 The impressive but altered Tuscan Mannerist frame, particularly the broken pediment, echoes the architectural forms Michelangelo depicted decades later in his sketches for the Porta Pia Gate, Rome. The frame would seem at that level to be a fitting choice for a painting by Michelangelo, simply referencing his wider career in a way that tacitly affirms the attribution. However, as the frame is an elaborate mid-sixteenth century design, it is certainly too late for this relatively early painting within Michelangelo's oeuvre.

127. Michelangelo, *The Entombment*, about 1500-1, National Gallery, London (Florentine sixteenth-century frame)

127a. Michelangelo, *The Entombment* (see 127), Room XXIX (present-day Gallery 12, looking west), 1923 Neo-Renaissance frame



IN-HOUSE RE-FRAMING

In comparison to the re-framing undertaken by professional dealers, the frames made in-house seem less sophisticated. There is a revealing document in the National Gallery archive by Cecil Gould, Deputy Director of the National Gallery from 1973-1978, in which he recorded the processes behind the re-framing decisions taken during Hendy's Directorship. We learn from Gould that Hendy bought the moulding used for re-framing for The Raising of Lazarus by Sebastiano del Piombo in Italy (NGI) (Fig. 3). The cornice, intended for a ceiling, was then fixed in a moulding to create the frame. In 1967 this painting was newly exhibited after 'years' of conservation treatment.300 The Board Minutes highlighted the Trustees' enthusiasm for the conservation work and their 'high praise' for the frame 'made in the Gallery workshops from a cornice purchased by the Director in Arezzo'.301 As a frame it makes no reference to the fact that the painting was originally an altarpiece. However, it must have been seen as more fitting than the Neo-classical frame that preceded it (Fig. 129). Parmigianino's Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Jerome (NG33) (Fig. 130) was framed using two sixteenth-century pillars which had been purchased at an auction in Florence. Gould and Paul Levi then designed the surround together. A drawing by Parmigianino depicting a similar frame was subsequently found in the Victoria and Albert Museum, although it did not have a pediment.³⁰² Gould posited that it could have been intended for the National Gallery's painting, indicating the desirability of recreating almost contemporary re-framing decisions.³⁰³ Despite the evident rationale for this re-framing decision, the new parts of the frame appear clumsy compared to the carved columns. This is perhaps because the old and new elements do not complement one another.

From the descriptions above it becomes clear that the aim of furnishing a painting with a frame of the same period and School had been abandoned. Instead, the more generic term 'contemporary' was used. Simultaneously, Hendy departed slightly from the School-chronology approach that the National Gallery had

128. Titian, Portrait of Gerolamo (?) Barbarigo, about 1510, National Gallery, London (seventeenth-century carved and gilded French frame)

(overleaf)

129. National Gallery's Room VI (presentday Gallery 30), 29 July 1970. National Gallery Archive, London





130. Parmigianino, The Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Jerome, 1526-7, National Gallery, London, in 1972 (early-twentiethcentury palimpsest frame, present-day disassembled; Renaissance columns and capitals in store)



sought to impose since the mid-nineteenth century, writing:

The tradition of grouping by schools has been largely maintained; but a good many exceptions have been made, partly for the sake of a more harmonious and stimulating ensemble and partly for the sake of historical truth, to show that the spirit of the time is usually more important than national boundaries, and that ideas can transcend both.³⁰⁴

Conlin describes Hendy's hanging as an attempt to trace a more

general *Zeitgeist* rather than attempting to isolate the chief characteristics of 'national schools' and I believe that this was evident in his approach to re-framing. Ana Baeza's unpublished PhD thesis is revealing in this regard. She demonstrates that Hendy felt limited by hanging according to School, and preferred to group paintings according to the period in which they were painted. As evidence to support this she cites Hendy's 1950 article 'Changes at the National Gallery' in which he argued that Roger van der Weyden and Giovanni Bellini had more in common than Van der Weyden and Rubens. Although this approach to display had been largely abandoned by 1950, it might be argued that it persisted in re-framing policy. Hendy's conception of museum display and 'the Renaissance' might account for this.

Throughout his career, Hendy insisted that knowing the original (architectural) context for which a painting was painted was vital to a proper understanding of the work. Although we should accept that Hendy's attitudes changed, insights into his concept of the Renaissance and how it could be adequately expressed in the period room format can be gained through the documentation relating to the construction of a Renaissance Room at the Israel Museum between 1968 and 1971 for which he was responsible. In a letter to Dr. Astorre Mayer he commented on his notion of the Italian Renaissance room:

'I think it is better to attempt the fullest possible representation of the Italian Renaissance, i.e. 1425 or so to 1600. The normal room was never all of one moment; people inherit things from the past and they continue to add things of the latest style to rooms designed for their grandparents'. 307

Hendy's belief that a Renaissance room was never frozen in a single moment, might have motivated his search for harmony through re-framing rather than attempting to recreate original re-framing solutions. He concluded: 'In short, what I myself am envisaging is a compromise between a period room and a miniature museum of Italian Renaissance decorative art. The pure period room of American museum type has for me too much the

feeling of suspended life'. 308

In the absence of period rooms, frames were perhaps one means of representing an aspect, and a changing one at that, of an Italian Renaissance interior to visitors.

Conclusion

This chapter clearly demonstrates that the aims motivating re-framing were totally reconceptualised after 1900 and that antique frames and copies of them were crucial to this process. What is remarkable is that the taste for old frames persisted at the National Gallery (and beyond) even when other traditionally held display values were modified. In 1931 Eric MacLagan, Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, delivered a lecture entitled 'Museum Planning' at the Royal Institute of British Architects. He identified the white walls, minimalist doorways and suspended laylights at Harvard's Fogg Museum as a suitable model to emulate.³⁰⁹ During the 1960s and 1970s, there were attempts at the National Gallery to conceal its Victorian architecture by lowering ceilings, raising floors and hiding ornaments behind false walls to emulate the minimalist display spaces at the Fogg. 310 Despite these changes, collecting and displaying second-hand frames survived in this environment. In stark contrast to this continuity, the project was almost totally abandoned in Italy. For example, during the 1950s, the architect Carlo Scarpa jettisoned any non-original frames in museums. The Director of the New National Gallery of Sicily said that Scarpa had persuaded him to 'do away with the majority of frames which are not originals'.311

This rationale was continued in the conservation-restoration philosophy of Cesare Brandi (1906–1988). He maintained that frames function in relation to their original architectural space 'spatiality'³¹² and as such could not be dictated by 'pictorial issues'. ³¹³ Although the painting would therefore need to be 'orientated' if placed in a new environment without its original frame, he claims that stylistic continuity through the addition of a frame of the same period as a picture, but not original to it, does not achieve this. ³¹⁴ Brandi's

initial solution was to display paintings that lacked their original frames and had been removed from their original context, without any picture frames.³¹⁵ However he came to believe in the need for a connective device, identifying Carlo Scarpa's use of a 'ring of emptiness' around the paintings at the Galleria dell' Accademia in Venice as a successful solution to the problem.³¹⁶

How might we account for the resilience of old frames at the National Gallery? Firstly, it has been demonstrated that they offered a re-framing approach which could adapt to different museological needs and environments. Furthermore, setting up a stylistic continuity between the panel and the frame surrounding it was perceived to complete the painting, declaring them to be whole. It was believed that wholeness between picture and frame could also be (re)created because they were of the same age or quality. In adhering to this claim it can be argued that the fundamental function of art galleries could take place – looking at, and 'feeling' paintings. Finally old frames can convey something of the original context of the panel and in certain periods assimilated with the wall. However, these palimpsests were and remain interventions which resulted in the re-presentation of Italian Renaissance panels. Some paintings were presented in frames intended for a totally different type of painting, apparently reconfiguring their function, while others were framed in frames of a later or earlier date, meaning that they are forced to become products of a different stylistic period. Re-framing thus destabilised the temporal boundaries of the 'Italian Renaissance' as it was shown at the National Gallery. The question that remains is, as subsequent generations of National Gallery Directors, members of the Framing Department and Trustees view these palimpsests with different framing agendas and taste, should they be removed since they are not 'original' and if so what should they be replaced by?

- [1] NG1/5: Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 2 May 1883, 245.
- [2] Mündler (1856) 1985, 3 April 1856, 146. See Chapter 3, 138-42 of this thesis.
- [3] NGA1/1/64/7: Federico Sacchi to WB, 31 May 1872. I have yet to discover who Martegani was, but clearly a dealer.
- [4] Berlin IGG/39: Schottmüller, 'Bilderrahmen in der Gemäldegalerie', 1936.
- [5] Bode, English ed., 1921, 3.
- [6] Penny 1998, 377.
- [7] Benson 1914, 48.
- [8] Bazin, The Museum Age, 1968, 252.
- [9] Guggenheim, Le cornici, 1897, 12. By the museum in London, I assume that Guggenheim meant the South Kensington Museum.
- [10] See Simon/NPG: 'British Picture Frame-Makers, 1630-1950'. Examples of the use by twentieth-century artists of old frames can be found in the NG frame archive.
- [11] See Bode, 'The Berlin Renaissance Museum', 1891.
- [12] I draw the reader's attention to the use of textiles at the NG during the 1930s, see Fig. 6 for an example.
- [13] For the power of Trustees see Geddes Poole 2010.
- [14] See Chapter 1, 23-28 for theoretical readings of frames.
- [15] Bode 1912, 210.
- [16] See Chapter 4, 188-9, 199-203.
- [17] Penny 1998, 376.
- [18] Quoted in Thornton, Authentic Décor, 1984, 312.
- [19] For example Moore, *The Commonsense Collector*, 1910; Gade, *Collecting Antiques for Pleasure and Profit*, 1922 and Litchfield, *Antiques*, 1924.
- [20] Gilbert, Furniture at Temple Newsam and Lotherton Hall, 1978, 11.
- [21] *Ibid.* For Wornum see, 'The Exhibition as a Lesson in Taste', 1852.
- [22] Podro, Critical Historians, 1982, 71.
- [23] Olin, Forms of Representation, 1992, 176.
- [24] Riegl, 'The Modern Cult of Monuments', (1903) 1996, 73.
- [25] Ibid.
- [26] Iversen, Riegl, 1993, 34.
- [27] Friedländer, On Art and Connoisseurship, 1944, 332-334.
- [28] Ibid.
- [29] Friedländer, Genuine and Counterfeit, 1930, 25.
- [30] Ibid., 31.
- [31] Schwartz, 'Cathedrals and Shoes: Concepts of Style in Wölfflin and Adorno', 1999, 3.
- [32] Podro 1982, 98. Wölfflin's seemingly straight forward statements on style conceal the complexity of his use of the term. Initially Wölfflin posited that there was a common visual 'style' which pervaded any given period.

This conception of style depended on empathy theory, that is that the 'body mediated between spirit and form'. Wölfflin revised his idea of style between writing *Renaissance and Baroque* (1888) and *Classic Art* (1899). By 1899, Wölfflin's focus became pure form, although he never came to discount spirit. See Schwartz 1999, 3, 4 and 9.

- [33] Benson 1914, 48.
- [34] Penny 1998, 375.
- [35] Guggenheim 1897, 7-13.
- [36] Ibid.
- [37] Horne, Botticelli, 1908, 136.
- [38] Ibid., 154.
- [39] Bode, Sandro Botticelli, 1925, 20.
- [40] *Ibid.*, 20.
- [41] Ibid., 21.
- [42] Ibid., 165.
- [43] Ibid, 22.
- [44] Dictionary of Art Historians: Frida Schottmüller (see Websites).
- [45] See Rosenberg, 'Friedländer', 1959, 83-85.
- [46] Murray, 'Introduction', 1992, 8.
- [47] Bilsel, Antiquity on Display, 2012, 138.
- [48] Sheehan, Museums in the German Art World, 2000, 202. Quoted from Wölfflin's dissertation on the Psychology of Architecture in Joerissen, Kunstterziehung, 1979, 201-202.
- [49] Bode 1921, 3.
- [50] Ibid., 6. He identified the collections of the Marchese d'Azeglio in the Museo Civico in Turin and in his castle at Piedmont, the Poldi Pezzoli and Bagatti Valsecchi collections in Milan and the collection of Carrand in the National Museum of Florence as particularly important.
- [51] Volpi donated a collection of old frames to an art gallery. See Volpi correspondence to Bode in the Berlin archive: '...di donare alla Pinacoteca una collezione di Cornici antiche di mia proprietà' (Berlin IV/NLBode 640/1:Volpi to Bode, Florence, 10 January 1912).
- [52] Bode 1921, 3.
- [53] Ibid., 11.
- [54] Bode, Florentine Sculptors, 1928, 1.
- [55] Schottmüller, Die italienischen Möbel, 1922, 41.
- [56] Bode 1921.
- [57] Falke, English ed. 1879, xxv.
- [58] Ibid., 97.
- [59] *Ibid.*, 106. See Bode, 'Die Austattung der Gemälde', 1912.
- [60] *Ibid.*, 215.
- [61] Ibid., 110.
- [62] *Ibid.*, 111.

- [63] Fortini Brown, 'The Venetian casa', 2006, 55. By using evidence in account books, tax records and wills or adopting an anthropological approach, recent historiography has challenged the image of the Italian Renaissance interior constructed by late-nineteenth and early- twentieth-century historians. See Ajmar-Wollheim, Dennis and Matchette, 'Approaching the Italian Renaissance interior', 2007, 3.
- [64] Chini, Stefano Bardini e Wilhelm Bode, 2009, 15.
- [65] Scalia, 'Introduzione', 1995, 7.
- [66] Nesi, 'Wilhelm Bode e Stefano Bardini: tra arte e mercato', 2009 15-25. See also Mosco, *Antiche cornici italiane*, 1991, 11-12.
- [67] Mosco 1991, 12.
- [68] *Ibid*.
- [69] Fahy, L'archivio storico fotografico, 2000, tav. 1 and 2, 352-353.
- [70] Ibid., cat no. 29, 89
- [71] Ibid., cat no. 438, 258.
- [72] Ibid., cat no. 280, 180.
- [73] Voss, Preface, 1929.
- [74] Bode 1912, 209- 210.
- [75] Ibid., 211.
- [76] Berlin IGG/NR36: Schottmüller, Schinkelrahmen. See also Roenne, Ein Architekt rahmt Bilder. Karl Friedrich Schinkel und die Berliner Gemäldegalerie, 2007.
- [77] Bode 1912, 211.
- [78] Friedländer 1944, 96.
- [79] *Ibid.*, 95.
- [80] Ibid., 50.
- [81] For changes in picture-hanging practice see Waterfield 1992.
- [82] Levis and Paul, 'Collecting is the Noblest of All Passions!', 1995, 10.
- [83] Bilsel 2012, 102-3.
- [84] Klessmann, The Berlin Gallery, 1971, 47.
- Sheehan 2000, 145. From its foundation in 1830, the [85] Berlin Gemäldegalerie established a tradition for publishing scholarly catalogues. Gustav Waagen wrote, Verzeichniss der Gemälde-Sammlung des Königlichen Museums zu Berlin, described as a scholarly inventory and guide, arranged as the objects in the museum were, around schools and periods, and offering some critical judgement. Following the reorganisation of the museum building under Julius Meyer and Bode, a new and non-popularist type of scholarship emerged. The catalogue (Beschreibendes Verzeichniss) was organised alphabetically and included detailed notes on each painting accompanied by biographies of each artist. Evidently there was a market for the publication as it was republished nine times between 1878 and 1931.

- Bock, Gemäldegalerie Berlin, 1986, 6.
- [86] Bilsel 2012, 146.
- [87] Klessmann 1971, 66.
- [88] Ibid., 46.
- [89] Seidel, Das Renaissance-Museum, 1999, 62.
- [90] Klessmann 1971, 59.
- [91] Bode 1891, 512.
- [92] Klessmann 1971, 58. It would be misleading to describe the recreations of Italian Renaissance rooms in Berlin as period rooms. As Bazin maintains, the true period room, a reconstruction as opposed to a recreation, was an essentially American innovation, a seminal example being the recreation of an ancient Roman bedroom at the Metropolitan Museum in New York.
- [93] Bode 1891, 512.
- [94] *Ibid.*, 511.
- [95] Bode 1912, 215.
- [96] Ibid., 209.
- [97] Ibid. Archival evidence in Berlin suggests that Bode employed a nexus of dealers, mainly based in Florence and Siena, through whom he ordered new frames. Commissioning new frames (usually over £1000) was far more costly than purchasing old frames. For example an invoice from Giuseppe Bassani amongst the Bardini letters, dating from 1897, states the price of a large frame new frame as £1500. See Berlin IV/NL: Bode 629/1 −3.
- [98] Bode 1912, 214.
- [99] *Ibid*.
- [100] Berlin IGG/9: 31 January 1898, Friedländer to the Director.
- [101] We saw in Chapter 3, that Mündler considered one frame to be too expensive.
- [102] Berlin IV/NL Bode 640/1:Volpi to Bode, Florence, 10 January 1912. 'Dopo molto cercare avrei trovato una cornice policromata fiorentina del 1400 piuttosto buona di patina ma di un bell'oro, per altezza è precisa alla luce che la Signoria Vostra desidera centimetri 65 × centimetri 44 ½ invece di 47 mancano due centimetri e mezzo, cosa che io potrei sieme d'aver [?] facendola ingrandire i speso avendo di fare ciò, oggi istesso ho fatto fotografic[are]? la cornice e come sarà pronta una copia la spedirò subito, così l'Eccellenza Vostra mi scriverà che ne pensa, altrimenti guarderò di trovarla altrove'.
- [103] Berlin IV/NL Bode 629/3:Bode- Bardini, Florence, I June 1914, no. 14. One letter to Bode from Bardini dating from the 20 February 1904 reads: 'Intanto mi faccio premura di trovare la cornice per il quadro del quale l'ho mandato la fotogr[a]fia'.
- [104] V&A MA/1/B359/1: Stefano Bardini 1884-1890 File:

- Leighton to Armstrong, recorded with Minute 7 May 1890.
- [105] Berlin IV/NL Bode 629/1: Bardini, Stefano, Firenze 1888, no 8.
- [106] Berlin IV/NL Bode 629/3: Bardini, Stefano, Firenze 13 March 1904, no 13.
- [107] Ibid.
- [108] The comparison is shown in Roenne 2007, 98.
- [109] Bode 1912, 218.
- [110] Ibid., 217.
- [111] Other examples Bode cited were: the tabernacle on the tiny Bonfigli Altarpiece, the large coloured altarpiece frame on the Raffaellino del Garbo, and the coloured tondo on Donatello's small bronze Madonna.
- [112] Bode 1912, 216.
- [113] Voss 1929, 83.
- [114] Guildhall Library: CLC/B/173/MS/9473/002.
- [115] Penny 2004, 389. See also Rubin, 'The Outcry', 2013, 253-275.
- [116] Warren, 'Bode and the British', 1996, 126.
- [117] Berlin IV/NL Bode 4702: Salting to Bode, 14 November 1893.
- [118] NGFD: Dossier NG2493, Levi-Penny Survey. This painting is also sometimes given to Pinturicchio.
- [119] For information on Buck see Appendix 2.
- [120] Guildhall Library: CLC/B/173/MS19474.
- [121] NGFD: NG2509. Levi-Penny Survey and conversation with Peter Schade.
- [122] NGFD: NG2493. Levi-Penny Survey.
- [123] In conversation with Peter Schade.
- [124] Penny 2004, 389.
- [125] Ibid.
- [126] Quoted in Baker 1996, 3. Letter 2, August 1879.
- [127] From 'Art Notes, Victoria and Albert Museum', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 November 1908. Quoted in *Ibid*.
- [128] Ibid.
- [129] Allen, The European Tour, 1923, 76.
- [130] NG17/5: NG Annual Reports, 1887-1897, 1887, 4.
- [131] Allen 1923, 76.
- [132] Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743).
- [133] NG1/7: Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1897-1909, 12 March 1907, 302.
- [134] Ibid., 17 July 1908, 355. 'The Director reported that he had accepted a gift from Sir George Donaldson of a Venetian frame in which had been placed the 'Portrait of Doge Loredan' by G. Bellini.
- [135] NG1/8: Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1910-1918, 14 November 1911, 72.
- [136] Langmuir, The National Gallery Companion Guide, 1994, 23.
- [137] Campbell, et al., Renaissance Faces, 2008, 108.

- [138] Dunkerton et al.,1991, 64.
- [139] Humfrey, 'Doge Leonardo Loredan', 2004, 44.
- [140] Goffen, Giovanni Bellini, 1989, 207.
- [141] NG, An Abridged Catalogue of the Pictures in the National Gallery, 1901, 36-37.
- [142] Humfrey, Painting in Renaissance Venice, 1995, 107.
- [143] Jones et al., Frederic Leighton, 1996, 234.
- [144] Christie's, Lord Leighton of Stretton, 1896.
- [145] Arnheim 1988, 55.
- [146] Klonk 2009, 49.
- [147] Holmes, Self and Partners, 1936, 220.
- [148] Ricketts, Self Portrait, 1939, 133-134. Quoted in Delaney, Charles Ricketts, 1990.
- [149] Ibid., 134.
- [150] Proust, Within a Budding Grove, 1924, 310-311.
- [151] MacColl, 'Twenty-One Years of the National Art Collections Fund', 1924, 175.
- [152] Ibid
- [153] See Chapter 1 for discussion of the ergon and parergon.
- [154] The enquiry was led by Lord George Curzon. Prior to his appointment as a Trustee to the National Gallery in 1911, he had been Viceroy of India. The report focused on how to increase funds for the acquisition of paintings by the nation. The impact of the report was mitigated by the outbreak of the First World War. See Gilmour, *Curzon*, 1994, 399-400 and Saumaurez Smith 2006, 108.
- [155] Penny 1998, 377.
- [156] Benson 1914, 48-50.
- [157] Berlin IV/NL Bode 4702: Salting, George.
- [158] Avery-Quash and Crookham 2014, 1.
- [159] Benson 1914, 49.
- [160] *Ibid*.
- [161] *Ibid.*, 48.
- [162] Conlin 2006, 121. Holroyd had trained at the Slade and had been appointed the first Keeper of the newly founded Tate in 1897.
- [163] Benson 1914, 48.
- [164] Ibid.
- [165] Ibid., 49.
- [166] Ibid., 48.
- [167] For further details of the Holbein controversy see Rubin 2013, 253.
- [168] MacColl 1924, 176.
- [169] Holmes, 'Introduction', 1927, xviii.
- [170] Benson 1914, 48.
- [171] Ibid.
- [172] Ibid.
- [173] Ibid.
- [174] Ibid., 46.
- [175] Ibid., 49.

- [176] Ibid.
- [177] Ibid., 50.
- [178] Chiarugi, Botteghe di mobilieri in Toscana, 1994, 450.
- [179] Ibid., 451. On Corsi's retirement his designs were transferred to Ferruccio Vannoni.
- [180] NG1/8: Minutes of the Board Trustees, 1910-1918, 8 February 1916, 296-7.
- [181] Ibid., 27 February 1917, 298.
- [182] Vasari (1550) 1996, 186-187 (Life of Masaccio).
- [183] Poggi, 'La Tavola di Masaccio ', 1903; Borsook, 'A Note on Masaccio in Pisa', 1961, 212, n. 8.
- [184] Guggenheim 1897, plate 2.
- [185] NGFD: NG3046. Holmes to Benson, 16 May 1917.
- [186] Davey 2012, NG3046.
- [187] Delaney 1990, 184.
- [188] Elam, 'A More and More Important Work', 2003, 147.
 It does not appear that frame-makers advertised in *The Burlington Magazine*.
- [189] Bode, 'Dr. Bode', 1910, 253.
- [190] Ibid., 253. The German influences on the National Gallery are suggested by the fact that Holmes wrote an essay for the 60th birthday Festschrift for Friedländer in 1927.
- [191] Conlin 2006, 123.
- [192] Clark, 'Introduction', 1939, xv.
- [193] NG24/1934/6: Press cuttings, January-November 1934, The Times, 4 1934.
- [194] Fry, 'The National Gallery', 1919, 79.
- [195] Holmes 1936, 368.
- [196] Ibid. Klonk 2000, 338 and Whitehead 2005a, 11.
- [197] *Ibid.* Brunelleschi designed the sacristy between 1420 and 1420.
- [198] Ibid., 369. This corresponded with his hang at the National Portrait Gallery, where he removed the green wallpaper to reveal panelling. This panelling was then stained, the upper part of the walls painted white and a cornice added. This he argued gave the galleries 'a far-off resemblance to panelled rooms in a Tudor mansion'.
- [199] Holmes 1936, 290.
- [200] Fry 1919, 79.
- [201] Anon., (Horne) 'The State of the National Gallery', 1898a, 279. This reference was in Nicholas Penny's archive and provided by Scott Nethersole. I can find no photographic evidence of this frame. However there is a letter from Edward Poynter to James Cromar Watt in which we get a sense of its appearance. Poynter writes 'reduce the red and ... make the blue interspace no wider ... reduce the inner mouldings in the profile' indicating it was a polychromed moulding frame. (See NGFD: NG1436. Letter from Poynter to Watt dated 17 September 1895).

- [202] See Chapter 2.
- [203] Ricketts 1939. Diary entry 16 June 1916. Quoted in Saumarez Smith 2009, 113 and Delaney 1990, 283.
- [204] *Ibid.*, 115.
- [205] V&A, 'Architectural History of the V&A 1873 1899' (https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/building-the-muse-um#slideshow=31131014&slide=0; accessed 06/09/2024).
- [206] Saumaurez Smith 2009, 115-117.
- [207] V&A MA/1/N102: Nominal File: National Gallery. Correspondence between Brasckett and Clifford Smith, 3 June 1931.
- [208] NG16/105/3: Framing and Hanging, 1930-33, 'Pictures and Frames in Rijksmuseum'.
- [209] NG1/10: Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 'Memorandum on Frames', 10 January 1928- 9 December 1930. Under 'Procedure for Getting Frames'.
- [210] Ibid.
- [211] Ibid.
- [212] NG17/9: Annual Reports, 1921-1930, 1929.
- [213] NG1/10: 'Memorandum on Frames', point 4.
- [214] Ibid
- [215] Ibid.
- [216] Ibid.
- [217] Ibid.
- [218] Ibid.
- [219] NG1/11: Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1931-1939, 4 April 1931, 16.
- [220] Ibid.
- [221] NG1/II: Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1931-1939, 10 February 1932.
- [222] NG17/10: Annual Reports, 1924-1934, 1933, 6.
- [223] NG24/1934/6: Press cuttings, January-November 1934, 'Careful watch on Old Masters' in *Evening News London*, 26 March 1935.
- [224] NG1/10: Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1928–1930, 11 June 1929, 90.
- [225] NG17/9: Annual Reports, 1921-1930, 1930, 4.
- [226] NG17/10: Annual Report, 1925-1930, 1933, 3.
- [227] See Dunkerton et al. Titian, 2003, 149.
- [228] NG17/9: Annual Reports, 1921-1930, 1929.
- [229] For further details see Henry, 'Raphael', 2002, 270-274.
- [230] NG1/10: 'Memorandum on Frames', Procedure for Getting Frames.
- [231] NG1/9: Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1918-1927, 10 May 1927, 224.
- [232] Ibid., 225.
- [233] See Appendix 2 for Pygmalion.
- [234] For examples see Nicholas Penny's frame archive at the National Gallery.
- $[235] \qquad NG{\rm I/II: Minutes \ of \ the \ Board \ of \ Trustees, 1931-1939,}$

- 10 July 1934, 135.
- [236] NGFD: NG284. Letter from the Director to Dr. Cassirer, 18 March 1935.
- [237] Located in NGFD: NG284.
- [238] NGFD: NG1417.
- [239] Gordon, 'The 'missing' predella', 1996, 87.
- [240] What Gordon describes as the 'modern' frame does, as she rightly shows, disguise the fact that the central scene of the predella *Vision of Saint Augustine* was missing see *Ibid.*, 87.
- [241] Chesterton, 'Our Pesellino Masterpiece', 1929, 171.
- [242] For further details see Silver 2012, 114.
- [243] NGFD: NG727. Duveen Brothers Ltd. to W. G. Constable, 31 July 1929. Constable was made Assistant Keeper in 1923. He was a critic and expert on British art. See Conlin 2006, 154.
- [244] NG26/26/1: Trustees Correspondence, [unrecorded sender] to Daniel, August 1929.
- [245] NGFD: NG727. Duveen to Constable, 3 December 1929.
- [246] Daniel, Some Approaches, 1940, 34.
- [247] Curtin, 'Aesthetic Formalism', 1982, 315.
- [248] Quoted in *Ibid.*, 319.
- [249] Ibid., 319.
- [250] Daniel 1940, 10-11.
- [251] Clark, 'Sir Augustus Daniel', 1951, 3.
- [252] Ibid.
- [253] Ibid., 4.
- [254] Cannadine, Kenneth Clark, 2002.
- [255] Levey, Kenneth Mackenzie Clark, 1984. See Newbery 2002.
- [256] Clark, Another Part of the Wood, 1974, 225.
- [257] Ibid., 251. Clark returned to the incident, revealing that he had sent the frame to the cellars, where he had thought it had lain ever since, 'I went to the Gallery last week and found that my successor had put the frame back again'. Quoted in Clark, 'What is good taste?', 1959.
- [258] V&A: MA/1/N102 Nominal File; National Gallery, 13 April, 1938, Eric Maclagan to Kenneth Clark.
- [259] NGFD: NG1450. The frame was plate 80 in Guggenheim's *Le cornici*.
- [260] Clark, Looking at Pictures, 1960, 15.
- [261] Clark 1939, vi.
- [262] Clark 1960, 16.
- [263] Ibid., 17.
- [264] Clark, The Aesthetics of Restoration', 1938, 382-397.
- [265] Clark, 'Ideal Picture Galleries', 1945, 131.
- [266] Ibid.
- [267] Saumaurez Smith 2009, 12.
- [268] Clark 1974.

- [269] NG24/1947/16: D.A.A. 'Art Notes' in S.W.3 London, II January 1947.
- [270] NG16/105/6: Registry files: Framing and hanging, 1956-1960, 25 March 1958.
- [271] Ibid.
- [272] Ibid.
- [273] NG24/1934/7: Philip Hendy Information file. *The Times*, 8 September 1980.
- [274] Cox, 'Sir Philip Hendy', 1981, 33.
- [275] Ibid., 25.
- [276] Ibid., 33.
- [277] NGA/3/1/1: Directors Reports, Leeds City Art Gallery, 25 January 1937. For James Bourlet, see Appendix 2.
- [278] NG3/1/3:Yorkshire Correspondent, 'Temple Newsam' no date or title of paper.
- [279] See Appendix 2.
- [280] NGA/3/1/1: Directors Reports, Leeds City Art Gallery, 23 March 1936.
- [281] NGA3/2/3/20: Hendy, travel diaries to Italy. Ana Baeza provided me with this reference.
- [282] NG17/18: Annual Reports, 1962- 1964, 92. Helmut Ruhemann received a bursary from Cassirer to travel and paint in Spain between 1917 and 1919 and undertook restoration work for him in Berlin in 1919.
- [283] Butler, August and Rab, 1987, 2.
- [284] NG16/330/1: Registry Files Weaver Report. Report of a committee of confidential inquiry into cleaning and the care of pictures at the National Gallery, 45.
- [285] NG29/6/5: Hendy, 'On Cleaning an Old Master', 1961.
- [286] NG17/18: Annual Reports, 1962- 1964, 92. Helmut Ruhemann received a bursary from Cassirer to travel and paint in Spain between 1917 and 1919 and undertook restoring work for him in Berlin in 1919.
- [287] Ibia
- [288] NG26/18: Trustees' correspondence: Edward Playfair, Hendy to Playfair, 27 December 1950.
- [289] Ibid. Playfair to Hendy, 20 December 1950.
- [290] NG16/226/21: Registry Files. Sub Category frames. 30 January 1957.
- [291] Ibid.
- [292] Ibid.
- [293] NGA105.6: Framing & Hanging 1956-60, 7 February 1958.
- [294] NG, Annual Reports, 1938-1954, 27.
- [295] Ibid., 26.
- [296] NG1/15: Minutes of the Board of Trustees. 5 Jan 1967-5 Dec 1974, 6 April 1967. 'The Director said that for five years ending April 1966 the income of the Horn Fund had been allocated by the Trustees for the purchase of frames'.
- [297] NG, Annual Reports, 1938-1954, 27.

- [298] Bailey, 'Michelangelo's Entombment', 1994, 30.
- [299] Nagel, 'Michelangelo's London 'Entombment', 1994,
- [300] NG1/15: Minutes of the National Gallery Board Meeting, Thursday 2 November, 1967, point 142.
- [301] Ibid
- [302] NG17/2: Cecil Gould Papers.
- [303] NG59: Cecil Gould information file Letter from Cecil Gould to John England, 5 December 1991.
- [304] Saumarez Smith 2006, 134.
- [305] Ibid. Remarkably Hendy's hanging policy prompted a House of Lords debate in 1954. Lord Strabolgi deplored what he described as 'window dressing'. Lord Methuen who had been a Trustee of the National Gallery adopted a similar stance, maintaining that Hendy had betrayed the core principle of the National Gallery which was illustrating the development of Western Art. Other contributors to the debate described the hang as altogether too theatrical.

- [306] NG24/1950/9: Hendy, 'Changes at the National Gallery', 1950, 26-7.
- [307] NGA3/3/2/3: 26 December 1968 to Dr. Astorre Mayer, Milan.
- [308] Ibid.
- [309] Conlin 2006, 404.
- [310] Crookham, The National Gallery, 2009, 107.
- [311] Vigni, 'Working with Scarpa', 1984, 33-41. The frame was considered a vital device for looking at paintings in Scarpa's interiors. In Palermo, in cases where the original frame did not exist, 'frames' were created either by mounting the painting on a panel or allowing sufficient wall space to create the illusion of a frame.
- [312] Brandi, 'The Removal and Retention of Frames as a Conservation Issue', (1956) 2000, 123.
- [313] Ibid., 124.
- [314] Ibid., 125.
- [315] Ibid., 123.
- [316] Ibid., 125.



VI Frames and framing in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

In this final chapter, I compare how two successive Heads of Framing at the National Gallery, John England and his successor, Peter Schade, have approached the persistently problematic issue of re-framing Italian Renaissance panels. I explore England's and Schade's contrasting approaches to their framing inheritance and compare their responses to instances where the 'original' frame is both missing and its appearance unknown. I seek to address how these two Heads of Department use frames to intercede in the viewer's perceptual experience of Italian Renaissance art specifically in relation to authenticity. I then contrast Schade's re-framing policy and its ethical implications, to those practiced by his colleagues in other leading art institutions and to a lesser extent dealers. My intention is to reach a more general understanding of the factors that shape framing and re-framing policies and to consider the different results. I have also sought to tease out and address the wider questions my thesis has provoked and indicate how they might be of relevance to, and have an impact at, the National Gallery and comparable institutions.

Detail of the sixteenth-century entablature, once part of the Venetian cassetta frame for Sebastiano del Piombo's *Judith (or Salome?)* (see Fig. 104)

THE PRESENT NATIONAL GALLERY AND ITS FRAMING PAST

Currently on display in the Sainsbury Wing, paintings in original, gallery style Neo-Renaissance frames, in reused antique frames and in reproductions of them, hang side-by-side. This thesis has shown that interpretations of Renaissance frames and framing are always symptomatic of the specific historical moment in which they were made. As such, we may conclude that the presentation, indeed re-representation, of the 'Renaissance' is subject to diverse and constantly shifting factors. They range from changing art historical understanding of the 'Renaissance', new aesthetic concerns and reappraisals of what constitutes the Renaissance canon. Re-framing is also conditioned by the economic, social and political responsibilities of the Gallery. Neither should the impact of more pragmatic concerns, such as financial restrictions, be overlooked. To take one example of such period specific interpretation currently in Room 57, The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian by Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo (NG292) (Fig. 126) is displayed in a reproduction of a Renaissance frame commissioned from Arnold Wiggins & Sons in 1951. As we have seen in the previous chapter, this frame is indicative of a re-framing policy that sought to recreate a lost aesthetic and historical wholeness between the painting and its new frame. It is currently flanked to its right by The Virgin and Child with Saints Jerome and Dominic by Filippino Lippi (NG293), which still retains its mid-nineteenth-century Italian Neo-Renaissance frame (Fig. 53). This all'antica frame was considered to be an appropriate example for displaying an Italian Renaissance panel by the Gallery's first Director, Sir Charles Eastlake. To the right of *The Martyrdom* of Saint Sebastian hangs The Virgin of the Rocks by Leonardo da Vinci (NG1093) (Fig. 66). This panel was recently removed from its nineteenth-century 'San Giobbe' frame and re-framed in a palimpsest frame, assembled in 2010 in preparation for the Gallery's exhibition Leonardo da Vinci: Painter at the Court of Milan (2011/2012), which itself was a response to the cleaning of the painting. ⁴ The 'new' frame reveals a recent interest in making apparently authentic frames, including for panels whose original frame could never be remade, in order to recreate, indeed complete, the Renaissance object. Its

presence in the main Gallery compels us to revisit the historic and historicising re-framing solutions that surround it.

When these three frames are viewed side-by-side in the Sainsbury Wing in 2014, it might be asked firstly, which re-framing approach offers a more appropriate means of replacing a lost original frame? And secondly, how should evidence of previous framing styles be treated? This thesis has demonstrated that all of the examples above were viewed as appropriate at the time they were applied. But no re-framing can be viewed as permanent because the very construct 'appropriate' is conditioned by specific historical, economic and social circumstances as well aesthetic preferences, that extend beyond the immediate frame. The issue of removal is even more nuanced than the statement above supposes. Cesare Brandi, for one, argued that the only justification for removing historical objects or making changes to them is when they disturb the aesthetic qualities of the artwork. At any one period it has been possible to argue that collectors' frames, Neo-Renaissance, or 'poor quality' frames, might adversely affect viewing. They are all nonetheless historical artefacts, which though they may pass out of favour or fashion, retain the capacity to communicate something of the longer history of the paintings on display. An additional layer of complexity is added to the issue when we ask whether the exact rendering of a historical frame actually matters. Even experts can fail to notice the difference between old and new parts, and the National Gallery rarely communicates differences in status to its visitors. In his review of the recent exhibition Devotion by Design (2011), the art historian Peter Humfrey, commented that 'The Botticini [San Gerolamo altarpiece (NG227.1)] serves to show that it is not always possible to draw a sharp distinction between original and pseudo-Renaissance frames, since old and new decorative elements can be combined in a near-indistinguishable way'.

Equally, to give another example, in the National Gallery audio guide entry to *The Demidoff Altarpiece* by Carlo Crivelli (NG788.1-9) (Fig. 131), the clearly nineteenth-century frame is described as being 'similar' to the original, a judgment that must be broadly related to generalised understandings of historic frame styles. If the National Gallery is concerned with the narratives it wants to communicate

131. Carlo Crivelli, The Demidoff Altarpiece, 1476, National Gallery, London (nineteenth-century frame)



to its visitors about its Renaissance collections, particularly the issue of their first context and intended function, then the distinction between frame types is of primary importance.

Debates surrounding re-framing become more complex when the question is applied to historic, historicising and Neo-Renaissance frames. For example at first glance the 'San Giobbe' frame surrounding Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* (NG1093), does not appear to operate any differently to the 2010 frame, since they are both executed in the *all'antica* style. By contrast, in some European collections, there are a number of cases where there is a very strong aesthetic and historical argument for re-framing. To cite just one example, in the Museo de Bellas Artes in Valencia, some of the sixteen dismembered parts of an altarpiece by Nicolás Borrás Falcó (1530–1610) are shown in the collectors' frames in which they arrived at the museum. Others are unframed, and two retain evidence of their original integral framing, creating a highly disparate effect (Fig. 132). Equally, an altarpiece by Pere Nicolau (active 1390, d.

1408) in the same museum, retains its original frame, but is missing its central section and is shown in a way that makes this *lacuna* clear (Fig. 133). In both of these instances, the frames and framing convey something of the object's chequered history. But the viewer's experience of the painting, in terms of any aesthetic coherence, is undoubtedly compromised, meaning that one of the most important functions of the art gallery has not been met.

REFOCUSING ON FRAMES IN THE LATE-TWENTIETH AND EARLY-TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

Over the last thirty years, a variety of internal and external factors have brought the issue of framing and re-framing at the National Gallery into focus. Renewed interest in the selection and treatment of frames is demonstrated by, but not restricted to, the construction of a proto-framing policy in the form of the Levi Surveys of the early 1990s. Many of the issues stimulating this resurgence of interest are similar to those we have observed in previous chapters – restoration and conservation campaigns, new architectural projects, and shifts in the construction of the Renaissance canon. But there are also clearly observable new pressures impacting on framing, including 'blockbuster' exhibitions, which frequently make demands on the Gallery's Framing Department to frame works for temporary display. The influence of Nicholas Penny, an art historian with a long history of interest in frames becoming Director in 2008, and the establishment of a Development Department which can fundraise for particular (and often costly) frame acquisitions, must also be taken into account. Furthermore, research generated in recent publications on frames, specifically Renaissance frames and altarpieces, has also encouraged re-framing. Certainly, as more becomes known about original framing solutions, the desire to recreate them increases. Three further motivating factors which shape re-framing were outlined in Master Plan (2006): the Gallery's identification of its own responsibilities to its publics and collection; its attitude towards its past in the form of revisiting its Victorian interiors and increased focus on professional conservation standards.

132. Nicolás Borrás Falcó, Altarpiece of the Monastery of San Jerónimo de Cotalba, 1575, Museu de Belles Arts de València



THE NATIONAL GALLERY AND ITS PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Although marginal and rarely mentioned directly, frames and framing occupy an integral position in relation to the Gallery's objectives as outlined in its *Master Plan* (2006). Its chief responsibilities were described thus '[to] care for the collection, to enhance it for future generations, primarily by acquisition, and to study it, while encouraging access to the pictures for the education and enjoyment of the widest possible public now and in the future'.⁷

Throughout this thesis, it has been shown that frames and framing play a vital role in physically caring for the collection (primarily as protective devices), as well as signalling that the paintings are well maintained and, in various ways, valued. As the first chapter demonstrates, frames and framing are fundamental to understand-



133. Pere Nicolau, Altarpiece of the Seven Joys of the Virgin Mary, about 1400, Museu de Belles Arts de València

they were collected and displayed. Frames also require and have received scholarly attention as objects in their own right. In the National Gallery Pocket Guide to *Frames*, Neil MacGregor noted that 'Hanging on the wall ... as well as the pictures, is a great collection of frames, with their own history – hardly less complex and no less fascinating'. In publications such as *Giotto to Dürer*, which was published to coincide with the opening of the Sainsbury Wing in 1991, frames are treated in their own section under the broader heading of 'Techniques'. The inclusion of re-framing activity in *The National Gallery Review of the Year* also testifies to the importance of communicating framing activity to Gallery visitors.

Providing access, which *Master Plan* identifies as operating on physical, physiological, emotional, and intellectual levels, is also identified in that strategy document as being key to the Gallery's

public responsibilities. Once again, frames and framing have a role in fulfilling these public duties. The document defines intellectual access as 'the ability to engage with pictures as works of art with a power to move people as representations of sometimes unfamiliar subjects, in sometimes unfamiliar styles, as the products of particular cultures, places and individuals, and as material objects with a history of their own'. ¹⁰

It has been demonstrated that frames can, to some extent and in conjunction with other information, convey how the Italian Renaissance paintings on display functioned as objects and locate them within a specific time and culture. *Master Plan* also acknowledged that the paintings on display should be appreciated as aesthetic, and not only historical objects. The report maintained that aesthetic 'looking' occurred when visitors could examine paintings 'without visual or aural disturbance, distraction or clutter and in surroundings that complement rather than detract from their intrinsic value as great works of art'. ^{II}

It was shown in Chapter I that frames and framing can be essential in rendering 'aesthetic' experience. One of the factors the report identified as a threat to the aesthetic experience was, and arguably remains, the Gallery's Victorian spaces, for example the Barry Rooms. It maintained that audience research revealed that visitors wanted to view 'great works of art' in 'contrasting eye-cleansing areas'.

**Master Plan* is indicative of an institution reflecting on its historical inheritance and public duties. These interests are clearly apparent in the Levi Surveys conducted some ten years earlier.

Towards a framing policy

During the 1990s a clear rationale for removing frames was established by Nicholas Penny, then Clore Curator of Renaissance Painting, and frame maker Paul Levi in the context of a wider survey of all the collection's frames. ¹³ Penny's publications on frames reveal an appreciation for nineteenth-century frames, a taste which has largely fallen out of fashion. Levi had specialist knowledge of antique frames. ¹⁴

The so-called Levi Surveys, as their findings are referred to, document every frame around every picture in the National Gallery. Alongside recording the dates and origins of the frames, Levi and Penny commented on the quality, suitability, and improvability of the frame in question. The ranking systems that Levi and Penny employed ranged through 'original', 'excellent' 'good' and 'poor'. 'Improvable' could be addressed as a simple 'yes' or 'no'. In general, the quality of the frame dictates its suitability and a frame described as 'poor' would provide a justification for its removal. But all these statements are subject to taste, a fact that is demonstrated most clearly by the fluctuating treatment of the Gallery's Victorian frames. The majority of the nineteenth-century frames were categorised as 'good' and 'not improvable' by Levi and Penny and, therefore, should remain on display. But this has often not been their fate, particularly in recent years. The treatment of Victorian frames reveals how problematic it is to implement a framing policy, since what is considered appropriate is inextricably linked to subjective judgments of taste and wider museological concerns.

In his discussion of the Sainsbury Wing in the early 1990s, the former Keeper of the National Gallery, Michael Wilson, made one reference to Victorian frames, stating that 'a number [of paintings] have been refitted in Victorian pastiche frames, which until recently were considered inauthentic and were replaced by modern slips'. ¹⁵

Characterising nineteenth-century frames as 'inauthentic' is to miss the point. As has been previously stated, the intention behind them was never to replicate an existing frame. Moreover, there is a degree of intolerance towards the very characteristics that render Victorian frames 'Victorian'. Thus, the majority of the ornament, chiefly consisting of candelabra on the late nineteenth-century English-made frame surrounding Cima's *Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (NG816), was removed during the 1980s (Fig. 134). ¹⁶ As we saw in the second chapter, this ornament was not simply decorative but part of a wider understanding of the agency of its forms. Equally Victorian interventions to Renaissance frames are rarely retained. In 1989, for instance, the majority of the nineteenth-century oil gilding and dark blue paint applied to the original frame sur-

134. Cima da Conegliano, The Incredulity of Saint Thomas, about 1502-4, National Gallery, London (nineteenth-century altar frame, adapted in the late twentieth century)



rounding Crivelli's *Madonna della Rondine* (NG724.1-2) was removed (Fig. 20). ¹⁷ New gold was then applied to areas where it had been lost and was subsequently distressed to harmonise with the original. In Chapter 3, I showed that the nineteenth-century interventions were motivated by the first Director of the National Gallery, Charles Eastlake, who stated that brightly gilded frames risked dazzling the eyes of the visitors and having a detrimental impact upon their perception of colour in the paintings. ¹⁸ The frame in its Victorian state was evidence of the National Gallery's past, not only in terms of framing but wider issues of display. The justification for these actions is that these paintings are no longer being viewed in the nineteenth century but by contemporary audiences and thus do not need to be surrounded by an obviously

Victorian frame. They can also be seen in the light of a painting restoration policy which sought to return pictures to something approaching their original state, albeit one that seems to place an added burden on an original frame to exhibit 'authentic' old age, by toning down and fatiguing the water gilding.

The treatment of the two case studies described above is inextricably linked to the Gallery's wider attitude to its Victorian inheritance. As Emma Barker, Christopher Whitehead and Tim Barringer have discussed, the restoration of the National Gallery's Barry Rooms in 1986 compelled the institution to examine its relationship with its Victorian past. ¹⁹ The results of this reflection are not consistent across the display policy of the Gallery. Barringer cites the positioning of Frederic Leighton's Cimabue's Celebrated Madonna (1855) high above the entrance hall of the National Gallery, where it becomes mere 'decoration', as an example of a latent and resilient hostility towards Victorian art. This is in contrast to the desire to reinvigorate the presence of Victorian ornament and architecture at the National Gallery through the restoration of the Barry Rooms.²⁰ Barringer has also argued that the status of the Victorian decorative arts has always been 'subtly' different to its paintings and architecture, by which he means that the former are held in higher regard.²¹ With regard to the decorative arts, Barringer was thinking of artists such as William de Morgan and not the often anonymous frame-makers of the Victorian period, whose work has not been generally appreciated. These conflicting approaches to the Gallery's Victorian inheritance help us to understand why maintaining a consistent framing policy is so complex.

But if nineteenth-century frames are not retained, what can they be replaced with and according to what criteria? In the following paragraphs, I will examine framing and re-framing under John England in relation to the Sainsbury Wing. By considering the relationship between frames and architectural space, I interrogate how the encounter with Renaissance art was managed for the visitor in this period.



135. View of the National Gallery's Sainsbury Wing (looking west) with Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano's *Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (Gallery 61), in 2008

THE RITUAL ENCOUNTER WITH ITALIAN RENAISSANCE ART

The National Gallery's Sainsbury Wing, financed by Simon and Sir Timothy Sainsbury and designed by the architects Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown (Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates) of Philadelphia, opened in 1991. It was built specifically to display the National Gallery's collection of early Renaissance paintings, principally those from the Italian School.²² The decision to display this part of the collection in the new building was also a response to pragmatic needs. The then Director, Neil MacGregor, commented: 'Reasons of conservation suggested giving the earliest, most fragile pictures protection and climate control'.²³

Carol Duncan's delineation of the art gallery as a site for ritual encounters is as applicable to the Sainsbury Wing as it is to the National Gallery in the nineteenth century. The visitor can approach the Sainsbury Wing from two entry points, both of which affect their understanding of the Renaissance canon in different ways. If the visitor enters directly from Trafalgar Square, he or she will be confronted with a long flight of stairs, which resemble the monumental staircase to Santa Maria in Aracoeli in Rome. As they ascend, they should, in theory, read the canonical names of painters inscribed onto the wall as they go. They include not only Bellini, Raphael and Leonardo, but also the Northern painter Jan Van Eyck. Ideally, before entering the galleries to the left, the visitor will pause at the top of the stairs and peer straight through to The Incredulity of Saint Thomas by Cima (NG816) (Fig. 135), before undertaking a journey (perhaps pilgrimage) which if followed to plan, closely adheres to Vasari's development from late medieval painting to Leonardo. Alternatively, the visitor can enter from Room 9 in the Wilkins Building, which contains Venetian painting dating from 1530 to 1600. This visitor may have passed through galleries containing paintings by Michelangelo, Sebastiano del Piombo, Titian and Raphael. This second pathway would mean that the viewer would start by seeing works by painters positioned at the apex of Vasari's conception of artistic development, before moving to the 'origins' of the Renaissance, and then charting a



Vasarian vision of artistic 'progress'.

The visitor would also pass from one distinctive architectural space to another. The later pictures are hung against damask wall covering in an environment akin to an eighteenth-century country house picture gallery, while examples from the early Renaissance are displayed in the pseudo-Renaissance interiors of the Sainsbury Wing. This is a revealing division. The interiors of the Wilkins building render the paintings on display part of a wider discourse on collecting, acknowledging approaches to display beyond their original context. By contrast, the Sainsbury Wing interiors encourage the viewer to consider the panels in relation to their first context, playing down issues of acquisition and collecting. Alongside the institution's interpretative strategies, both settings have implications for our wider understanding of suitable or appropriate frames, which, by extension, depends on the types of narratives communicated to the visitor concerning the Renaissance.

The architecture of the Sainsbury Wing, which is also a major element in shaping the display of the early Renaissance at the National Gallery, aims to evoke an Italian Renaissance space without replicating one. The use of *pietra serena*, pale grey walls, high ceilings, moulded cornices and clerestory windows makes clear, but unspecific references, in a postmodern manner, to the interiors of Italian Renaissance churches and palaces. Even if a replica of a specific building had been considered desirable, no one period setting could have accommodated the Northern European, Italian, secular and sacred panels that constitute the 'early Renaissance' at the National Gallery. Indeed many of the paintings would never have been displayed in either a chapel or palace environment.

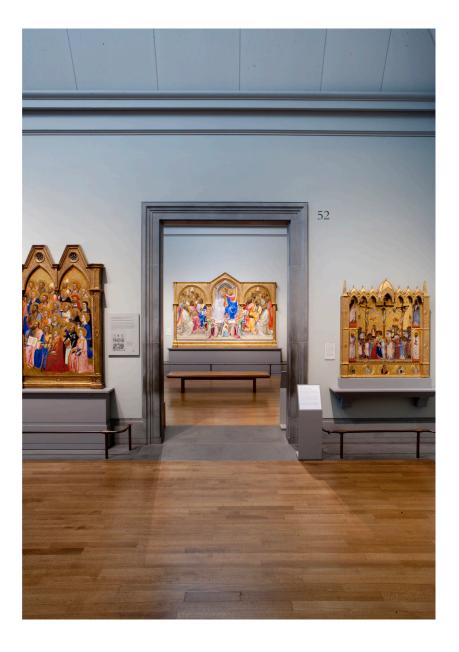
The pseudo-Renaissance interior was not simply intended to create a vaguely appropriate space in which to view the paintings it contained but was also designed to enhance and intervene in viewing. The wall colour was deliberately conceived to act as 'a foil to the rich colouring and gilt frames of the paintings'. ²⁶ But more important to the conception of the Sainsbury Wing as a gallery space are the presence of massive archways and the series of vistas that they create. Wilson maintained that they allowed

the paintings to be viewed but not contained²⁷ in a 'tranquil' and 'dignified' environment.²⁸ Kali Tzortzi goes further, arguing that the presence of these archways intervenes in the 'narrative' that curators intend to communicate to visitors. He points out that 'the display is structured as a network of galleries whose door openings become the frames of visual compositions. It is no accident that the gallery is centred on the door rather than on the wall'.²⁹

The framing function of the doorways underlines the central objective of the Sainsbury Wing, namely to highlight panels that belong to the Renaissance canon as it is exhibited at the Gallery, within a more general display of artistic development. Although the frequent exhibition demands that lead to re-hanging, have often changed which masterpieces command the vista, the sequence of doorways draws particular attention to paintings in specific locations. In addition to Cima da Conegliano's The Incredulity of Saint Thomas (NG816), the viewer's gaze is drawn to some of the largest paintings that were originally conceived as altarpieces including Lorenzo Monaco's Coronation of the Virgin (NG1897) (Fig. 136), Leonardo da Vinci's The Virgin of the Rocks (NG1093), The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian by Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo (NG292) and Matteo di Giovanni's The Assumption of the Virgin (NG1155) (Fig. 137). The doorways not only isolate certain works but also heighten their perspectival qualities. Thus, they draw out a commonly held belief that the 'Renaissance' is synonymous with the representation of three-dimensional space and play with the idea that the paintings extend into the real space of the Gallery, which is particularly appropriate for altarpieces.³⁰ We might conclude from this analysis that the 'Renaissance' as it is presented in the Sainsbury Wing, is characterised as being primarily devotional, associated with perspective and punctuated by masterpieces. This narrative is consolidated and enriched by the additional interpretative apparatus available to the visitor.

At the time of writing, explanatory panels for the rooms in the Sainsbury Wing have been removed. Instead, the main interpretative tools are the shorter labels beside the paintings and the audio guide entries, which largely reiterate the same information.³¹ The introduction to the audio guide invites listeners to 'lose' them-

136. View of the National Gallery's Sainsbury Wing (looking south) with Lorenzo Monaco's Coronation of the Virgin (Gallery 53), in 2016-17



selves in the gallery spaces amidst 'famous' and 'great' paintings, endorsing a belief that, first and foremost, the Gallery seeks to provide an immersive experience. One that might be accessible instinctively and heightened by the perceived quality of the paintings rather than conditional upon learnt information. The visitor is then free to choose explanations of specific paintings, which are analysed in terms of the artist(s) who made them, their subject matter, technical information and collecting history. Because the visitor can select the recorded entries they want to listen to, rather than following a prescribed route by theme, there is no overarching explanation of the 'Renaissance'. Instead, listeners



137. Gallery 60 (north wall) in the Sainsbury Wing with Matteo di Giovanni's Assumption of the Virgin, in 2006

learn about some of its characteristics through analysis of specific paintings that shows a marked interest in their original contexts. The information provided includes material about the pictures' original frames. For example, the analysis of *The Mond Crucifixion* by the young Raphael (NG3943), which has recently been moved back again from the Wilkins building to the Sainsbury Wing, includes a brief discussion of the following: the artists' biography, the painting's compositional arrangement and the first position of the panel as a side altar in the church of San Domenico in Città di Castello. Finally, we are informed that its original stone frame still remains *in situ*. The frame is also mentioned in the entry to *La*

Madonna delle Rondine by Carlo Crivelli (NG724.1-2). Listeners learn that it is still surrounded by its original frame, which was viewed as an integral part of the altarpiece when it was painted. In relation to a different picture, the audio guide urges the visitor to imagine seeing *The Virgin of the Rocks* (NG1093) by Leonardo da Vinci in a dimly lit chapel.

It can be argued that the interpretative material in the Sainsbury Wing seeks to encourage viewers to see the panels on display in terms of a foreknowledge of their original context. Frames are clearly vital to this conception of the Renaissance, possessing the potential to convey a sense of the functions and contexts of the panels on display, while also enhancing the formal characteristics that render them 'Renaissance', especially perspective. But how has framing and re-framing in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century engaged with this mode of interpretation?

CONVEYING THE RENAISSANCE: ADAPTING RENAISSANCE FRAMES AND CONSERVATION APPROACHES

Adapting 'Renaissance' frames for 'Renaissance' paintings might seem an obvious way of communicating the 'Renaissance' to Gallery visitors, although the efficacy of this policy would clearly depend on public knowledge of Renaissance frame types. Furthermore, during the 1980s and 1990s, such an approach to re-framing was complicated by the evolving roles and responsibilities of the Framing Department and its repositioning within the conservation division of the National Gallery. In 1981 the main duties of the Framing Department were outlined as 'the restoration and conservation of the Gallery's frames as well as the design and construction of new ones'.³²

It was noted that a smaller budget was available for the acquisition of antique frames, but this was clearly not the main focus of the department.³³ By 1990, a date that corresponds with the imminent opening of the Sainsbury Wing, the use of old frames increased in importance. Wilson stated in relation to the Sainsbury Wing that 'where original frames are lacking, pictures are shown



138. Sassoferrato, The Virgin in Prayer, 1640-50, National Gallery, London (seventeenth-century Bolognese frame)

as often as possible in good antique frames'.34

Beyond cost, the main limitation restricting the acquisition of antique frames was their size. In January 1987, a seventeenth-century Bolognese frame was purchased from Arnold Wiggins & Sons for *The Virgin in Prayer* by Sassoferrato (NG200) (Fig. 138). The primary motivation for this selection must have been that the frame was viewed as appropriate for a painting dating from the seventeenth century. In addition, a key element of the decision-making process was that the frame did not need to be cut in order to accommodate the painting. Antique frames were also purchased speculatively. For example, a sixteenth-century 'Sansovino' frame was purchased by John England in the 1980s without a specific destination. It was not used until 2013 when it was adapted for *Portrait of Girolamo Fracastoro* (NG3949), which,

139. Titian, Portrait of Girolamo Fracastoro, about 1508, National Gallery, London (Sansovino frame)



after cleaning, had been reattributed to Titian (Fig. 139).³⁶ These two acquisitions of antique frames are isolated examples and not indicative of re-framing policy in the 1980s more generally, which was varied.

The policy of reusing antique frames only if they did not have to be adapted reflects the incorporation of the Framing Department into the conservation division of the National Gallery under John England. Its recent reversal is indicative of the department's increased separation from conservation under Peter Schade. The *Annual Report* for 2004, the year England retired, reported that he had transformed the department from 'a small technical workshop into a conservation department'.³⁷ This shift occurred in 1980 when England was appointed to the position of Senior Conservation Officer.³⁸ The responsibilities and expectations of a conservation department directly affected the status of frames

as objects and of re-framing, meaning that frames could not be altered for use around paintings for which they were never intended. By contrast, a recent statement on framing policy and conservation pronounced that newly-acquired antique frames do not become subject to conservation guidelines until they surround the painting. This allows a certain degree of freedom in which to cut, extend, re-gild and repaint antique frames, all of which are irreversible acts made to historically important manifestations of Renaissance design. Moreover these interventions mean that the frames can no longer be deemed to be in their original condition. It should be noted that changes made to frames are recorded, but it is questionable whether this type of documentation is sufficient in light of the sometimes radical alterations made to them.

England's adherence to conservation principles meant that he inevitably had to focus his attentions on making new frames. These frames may be read as attempts to replicate how panels were perceived to have been viewed and arranged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, without resorting to creating replicas of frames. It will be shown that these frames operate entirely differently to those selected and made by Schade.

THE CREATION OF NEW FRAMES UNDER JOHN ENGLAND

The issue of dismemberment is particularly relevant to any discussion of the re-framing of early Renaissance panels. The frames that were designed and made in the Framing Department under England facilitate, as far as possible, the correct structural arrangement of dismembered panels rather than recreating the appearance of an original early frame, as those made by Corsi in the 1880s did. ⁴⁰ For example, after an early Netherlandish School painting (circa 1500) known as *The Virgin and Child with Saints and Angels in a Garden* (NG1085) had been cleaned it was re-framed in a triptych frame of stained wood. The *Annual Report* for 1978–1979 maintained that the change of frame had resulted in the three panels being 'presented as closely as possible to their original form as a folding triptych'. ⁴¹ Similarly, the new frame for Nardo di Cione's *Three Saints* (NG581)

140. Nardo di Cione, *Three Saints*, about 1363-5, National Gallery, London (late-twentieth-century frame before modification/restoration)



altarpiece of circa 1365 refers only to the basic shape that the original frame might have taken (Fig. 140). Indeed, recreating a replica would have been impossible. Even the precise original location of the altarpiece, which is presumed to have been made for the church of San Giovanni della Calza, Florence is not known for certain, let alone the appearance of the original frame.⁴² It is revealing that this postmodern interpretation of a Renaissance frame was gilded in the same way it would have been in the Renaissance, and the illusion of age created to some degree by the exposure of underlying red bole. 43 The frame was never intended to be mistaken for the original. Instead it allows the visitor to see how the component parts would have been arranged, within a border that has the same colouring as the original frame might have done. 44 To some extent this strategy recreates the intimate relationship between colours in the painting and the surface of the original frame, or so England claimed. 45 Here, frames are being primarily used to support looking and to convey the original configuration of the panels within a sympathetic framework, where there is no actual model to copy. This re-framing practice replicates aspects of Renaissance framing, but not Renaissance frames as objects.

EARLY TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY RE-FRAMING AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY: AUTHENTICITY

Unlike that of England, Peter Schade's re-framing policy is conditioned neither by the Sainsbury Wing nor conservation principles. It takes its cue from a privileging of 'authenticity', attempting to recreate it by using art historical research to find or imagine original framing solutions. Schade's aim is then to recreate 'the Renaissance' for the Gallery's visitors, not only on a visual level, but also to enable them to 'feel' it. To a certain extent, because contemporary re-framing does not engage with the rendering of the 'real' in the postmodern interiors of the Sainsbury Wing, it can be more comfortably aligned with the aims of the recent temporary exhibition Devotion by Design: Italian Altarpieces before 1500 at the National Gallery. Susanna Avery-Quash has shown how bold the National Gallery's recent temporary exhibitions have been in drawing attention to the sacred nature of the religious art on display, their functions and spaces, in a secular space. 46 These exhibitions fit into the designated research strand, 'Art and Religion'.⁴⁷

Devotion by Design examined the settings, functions and development of altarpieces in Italy from the late Middle Ages to the early Renaissance. Luca Signorelli's *The Circumcision* (NG1128) was displayed in a dimly lit room and positioned as it would have been on an altar, with fake candles placed in front of it.⁴⁸ Sacred music, emanating from the darkened central exhibition space, heightened the visitor's awareness of the original settings and devotional functions of Italian Renaissance altarpieces (Fig. 141). Frames and framing were not only used to create a quasi-sacred context for the panels, but became the primary means of highlighting the transition from Gothic polyptych to Renaissance pala. This was achieved by comparing in the second room, Giovanni dal Ponte's Ascension of John

(overleaf)

141. Luca Signorelli's Circumcision in the National Gallery exhibition Devotion by Design in 2011





the Evangelist Altarpiece (about 1420–4?) (NG580.1–12) with Francesco Botticini's San Gerolamo altarpiece of 1490 (NG227.1).⁴⁹ The importance of seeing altarpieces in relation to their first contexts was clearly communicated to the press. A review of Devotion by Design by Martin Gayford began:

In a corner of Venice near the Cannaregio Canal is the church of Saint Giobbe ... Inside, you will find a beautiful carved 15th-century frame with the wrong picture in it. The original occupant – Bellini's great masterpiece the *San Giobbe Altarpiece* – is a mile or so away in the Accademia Gallery – where it doesn't really look as good as it would in that tranquil church. ⁵⁰

Devotion by Design offers an extreme example of 'resacralising' Italian Renaissance paintings for historical and educational ends within the limitations of a temporary exhibition space. In the permanent and secular exhibition space of the Sainsbury Wing, context and resacralisations are necessarily addressed in different ways, alongside other institutional agenda, both of them affecting re-framing policy and the presentation of the Renaissance.

Problematising recreating original frames in the Sainsbury Wing

In relation to altarpieces, it is doubtful whether it is possible, even if it were desirable, to replicate the intimate relationship between the painting and its first frame in the chapel environment using a 'new' frame. As we saw in the first chapter, in specific regard to altarpieces, frames and framing played a crucial role in facilitating and conditioning the reception of the painting they surrounded in the original context of a medieval or Renaissance chapel. In his pioneering work on the role of the spectator in completing works of art, John Shearman (1931–2003) argued that, in perspectival architectural settings, both the painter and worshipper shared the assumption that there was a continuum (albeit fictional) between the painted space depicted in the altarpiece and the real space of the chapel. ⁵² Thus, even if the

original frame remains with the painting, it cannot function in the art gallery in the same way as it did in a Renaissance chapel since neither the setting nor devotional attitude to what is depicted exist as conditions for reception.

Furthermore, replicating original framing strategies is challenging for other historical reasons. Polyptychs like Duccio's high altarpiece for Siena Cathedral, for example, were routinely adapted when renovated and even dismembered to accommodate new tastes in display.⁵³ During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, successive waves of suppression of religious institutions led to Italian Renaissance altarpieces being cut into conveniently sized segments for consumption by the art market and their dispersal as frame-less fragments. 54 One example is the Pistoia Santa Trinità altarpiece (L15; NG727; NG3162; NG3230; NG4428; NG4868) of 1455-60 by Francesco Pesellino and completed by Fra Filippo Lippi and workshop. The main panel was cut into six parts and the predella into five more during the eighteenth century. 55 However, its early twentieth-century all'antica frame, modelled on that surrounding Cosimo Rosselli's Madonna Enthroned between Two Angels (1482) in Santo Spirito, Florence, conceals this modern history (Figs. 2 and 124). The dispersal and loss of parts of painted ensembles makes reconstructing the original appearance of many of the Gallery's Italian Renaissance fragments, virtually or physically, difficult and therefore casts doubt on whether it is ever possible to replicate an original frame or framing.

Thirdly, even when there is surviving evidence suggesting how a panel was framed, it is not always desirable or possible to replicate it. This has proved to be the case for Sebastiano del Piombo's *The Raising of Lazarus* (NGI) for which Peter Schade designed a 'new' frame, based on the fragment of the original frame in the radial chapel of Saint Martin to the north of the apse of the cathedral of Saints Just and Pastor at Narbonne. ⁵⁶ The fragment is formed of a plank with horizontal mouldings and gold ornament in the form of a beribboned garland arranged against a blue ground, above which is the Medici *impresa* of a diamond ring with feathers and a scroll. ⁵⁷ From this evidence and other examples of the period, Christa Gardner von Teuffel reconstructs the possible form of the original frame. She maintains that the fragment acted as a

type of predella, which was set within a High Renaissance architectural frame of a suitable type for a monumental altarpiece. So Schade made a replica of this predella and subsequently located a pair of Italian sixteenth-century pilasters and a sixteenth-century Sicilian entablature, which he proposed joining together with the base to make a complete frame (Fig. 142). The design was rejected by curators on the grounds that it would overwhelm the other sixteenth-century paintings in Room 5 and that there was not enough evidence to substantiate the plausibility of the design, making the proposed new frame overly conjectural. So

This discussion underlines the frequently contradictory requirements and inconsistent priorities that affect framing and re-framing. In particular, it demonstrates that making a judgement on the suitability of a frame to a painting based only on its qualities as an object (as Levi and Penny did) is insufficient. These observations increase

- 142. Digital photomontage of a new frame for Sebastiano del Piombo's *Raising of Lazarus* (see Fig. 3), 2016-17
- 142a. Sebastiano del Piombo, *Raising of Lazarus* (NG1, see Figs 3 and 129) (composite frame)





our awareness of the factors and agents that motivate the presence, persistence and continual recreations of museological versions of Renaissance frames. Contemporary re-framing policies at the National Gallery can be framed within Cesare Brandi's discussion of the *unità potenziale* of the work of art (Fig. 142a).

As we saw in the last chapter, Cesare Brandi argued that paintings require some form of framing device, if not an actual picture frame, to connect them in spatial terms to their architectural environments. 60 By contrast, Peter Schade argues that there is a specific need for a picture frame. 61 He maintains that Italian Renaissance paintings, in particular, require frames because artists in this period were concerned with creating the illusion of real space, and, for him, picture frames help to enhance perspectival strategies. This is Schade's primary justification for framing fragments as if they were complete artworks, and indeed creating the illusion that they are whole. Despite the fact that Brandi wrote 'The Potential Oneness of a Work of Art' almost sixty years ago, we can read Schade's actions in light of what Brandi described as a desire to recover the lost 'oneness' of a work of art, here the relationship between frame and panel. The conservation theorist insisted that any actions undertaken to recreate 'oneness' should preserve the integrity of what he identified as the two key aspects of any artwork, its historical and aesthetic nature. 62 This would prevent the object being transformed into either an 'aesthetic fake' or an 'historical outrage' by the interventions of conservators. 63 Moreover Brandi argued that re-establishing oneness should not conceal any interventions made to the object nor interfere with the viewer's reception of it.⁶⁴ In the following paragraphs it will be demonstrated that Schade seeks to restore lost oneness for the Italian Renaissance panels at the National Gallery by re-framing them in a way which joins the panels to their new frames in temporal and aesthetic terms. While there is no doubt that Schade's framing choices transform the panels to an apparent whole, the authenticity of the new objects he creates is perhaps questionable.



CONTEMPORARY RE-FRAMING OF RENAISSANCE PANELS AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY: THE VOGUE FOR ADAPTING ANTIQUE FRAMES

Since John England retired in 2005, to the time of writing, as many as one hundred and forty paintings have been re-framed at the National Gallery by Peter Schade. Ninety-nine (72%) have been given often adapted, antique frames, thirty-eight (28%) have reproductions of old frames and two with a palimpsest of old and new parts combined to create a single frame. These statistics demonstrate a clear preference for using old frames, a taste which has been in vogue at the National Gallery since the 1850s, but was never fully realised until now. Schade stated in a recent interview with the frame historian Lynn Roberts that 'before [he] came to the Gallery, money for buying old frames had to be applied for from emergency funds, most frame changes were into replicas of original frames [which could be made in-house], and there wasn't the emphasis there is now on original frames'. 65

Although Schade drives this policy in collaboration with the Director and Curators, he works with and within a network of agents who share his aesthetic preferences, particularly the frame dealers for whom he has worked. In 1989, the 'National Gallery Christie's Furniture Fund' was established in honour of the chairmanship of John Anthony Floyd (1923–1998), who had also been Head of Christie's Furniture Department. The intention of the fund was to allow the National Gallery to purchase fine furniture and frames to 'enhance' its picture displays. Pecifically, the fund sought to encourage the acquisition of frames of the 'correct period and suitable quality' to the paintings, which, it was argued, would enhance the enjoyment of the collection.

The National Gallery works closely with leading London frame-makers and dealers to obtain antique frames and, indeed, to reinforce this taste outside its own collection. Although it did not belong to the National Gallery, in 2011, Arnold Wiggins & Sons were charged with sourcing a frame for Cracow's *The Lady with the Ermine* by Leonardo da Vinci in advance of the exhibition of 2011. Every suggestion they made involved replacing the Neo-Renaissance frame

and adapting an antique frame, indicating the extent to which the National Gallery's re-framing policy influences the presentation of even temporary loans. This attitude marks a real change. The frame dealer Rollo Whately observed that thirty years ago, unless an antique frame fitted a painting exactly, it would be copied. He maintains that clients drive the new taste, asking for the 'real thing' i.e. antique frames. He continues, 'Old frames somehow always look better than reproductions and often work out cheaper'. However, this vogue is not out of sympathy with the interests and tastes of frame dealers who possess large collections of antique frames, which are becoming increasingly expensive to store, and who have a clear need to sell them.

It should be noted that the National Gallery is unusual in having an in-house framing department, which is also able to engage with specialist frame-dealers. Most museums and galleries (including the Uffizi) commission frames from the aforementioned dealers, who in turn introduce antique frames to collections based on research on what might have surrounded the painting. This approach means that the art trade shapes how paintings are framed and, more problematically, its re-framings can be mistaken for being original. For example, Arnold Wiggins & Sons framed a cartapesta relief by Jacopo Sansovino in the Kimbell Art Museum, Port Worth with a Sansovino frame. 71 The effect is so convincing that in his National Gallery catalogue entry on Sansovino frames, Nicholas Penny posited that 'this type of frame takes its name from the sculptor and architect Jacopo Sansovino, perhaps because ... some of the relief sculpture associated with him (for example the cartapesta relief of the Virgin and Child in the Kimbell Art Museum) was framed in this style'. 72

Adapting old frames at the National Gallery

I now return to the National Gallery. Schade maintains that 'old' frames appear more 'original', by which he means the frame and not the results of re-framing.⁷³ As he himself acknowledges, pursuing a framing policy centred on acquiring old frames is, due to their limited supply and, no doubt, cost, restrictive. Effectively, Schade

can only acquire frames of the same origin and date as the painting instead of recreating 'entirely the original setting', which he argues is possible using reproduction frames. The Schade concludes by arguing that old frames are ultimately preferable to reproduction frames since the latter always 'reveal the time they were made' rather than the period they were intended to evoke. This statement is undoubtedly true, although it fails to acknowledge that Neo-Renaissance frames and those of John England were not intended to evoke any time other than their own.

Simple moulding frames dating from the late fifteenth century are now frequently adapted at the National Gallery for a broad range of Italian Renaissance paintings, especially for parts of dismembered altarpieces. Two sources of visual evidence have been used to justify the use of moulding frames on Italian Renaissance paintings: the fictional frame surrounding Perugino's self-portrait in a fresco of 1497-1500 in the Collegio del Cambio, Perugia (Fig. 143) and the original frame to Saint Jerome by Piero della Francesca (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) (Fig. 144). Both of these frames, whether on a fictive or actual level, are integral to the image. It might be argued in the case of the Perugino at least that the frame conformed to the painter's wishes. Schade attempts to render the wholeness and harmony he perceives between these panels and their moulding frames to make fragments appear complete. Examples of the reuse of moulding frames at the National Gallery include the re-framing of The Blood of the Redeemer by Giovanni Bellini (NG1233), The Vision of Saint Eustace by Pisanello (NG1436), A Muse by Cosimo Tura (NG3070), Saint Francis of Assisi with Angels by Botticelli (NG598) and Saint George and the Dragon by Uccello (NG6294). Although this list represents a range of paintings from a variety of contexts, they have in common the fact that it is not known how they would have originally been framed and displayed, although attempts have been made to reconstruct these past lives in art historical scholarship. 70 It is almost certain that the paintings would not have been framed in exactly the way they are today.

The 'new' moulding frame appears original to Bellini's *The Blood* of the Redeemer (probably 1460-5) (NG1233) as it is approximately the same age as the painting, retains its original gilding and engages





- 143. Pietro Perugino, Self-Portrait, 1498-1500, Sala dell'Udienza, Nobile Collegio del Cambio, Perugia
- 144. Piero della Francesca, Landscape with Saint Jerome, 1450, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (moulding frame)

with the composition of the image as its original frame might have done (Fig. 145). Its simple form appears to strengthen the receding perspective in the painting and pushes Christ into the foreground. In contrast, the previous Neo-Renaissance tabernacle or *all'antica* frame (associated with the framing of sacred paintings) had emphasised the holy nature of the object and subject, which is thought by some on the basis of its subject and scale to have been a tabernacle door (Fig. 146).⁷⁷ With hindsight and in comparison to the moulding frame, the tabernacle had appeared too large and the oil gilded surface too flat and dull, overwhelming the figure of Christ rather than enhancing the perspectival qualities of the painting with which Bellini is associated. To cite another example, in 2012 the part nineteenth-century and part sixteenth-century Venetian

145. Giovanni Bellini, The Blood of the Redeemer, about 1465, National Gallery, London (fifteenth-century moulding frame)

146. Giovanni Bellini, *The Blood of*the Redeemer (see Fig. 145; Neo-Renaissance frame)



frame was removed from Tura's *A Muse* (NG3070), in favour of a fifteenth-century moulding frame. The effect of the two frames on the painting is quite different. The earlier palimpsest frame encouraged the viewer's eye to move towards the throne, perhaps because of the shared abundance of ornament, whereas the moulding frame sharpens the sense of perspective and actually makes the panel seem bigger. Clearly, the criteria for judging both re-framing strategies is subjective, but the use of moulding frames arguably enhances the paintings as aesthetic and historical objects because they are of roughly the same date and seem to harmonise with one another in terms of colour. The former frames, being larger and more ornamental, alert us to the importance of the panels in a different way and, in the case of *The Blood of the Redeemer* (NG1233), reminds



us of its previous devotional function. I now turn my attention to Schade's use of reproductions and replicas to highlight how he imaginatively recreates lost frames.

REPRODUCTIONS AND REPLICAS

Schade claims that only reproductions or replicas of old frames can 'recreate the historical setting', although the legitimacy of this claim to recreate relies on the original frame being known.⁷⁸ These reproductions are then aged to create a whole object and, in doing so, allow the viewer's eye to make a smooth transition between the frame and the painting. Schade has commented:

In my view, for the frame to function properly, it has to complement the age of the painting ... I aim to create a believable link between painting and frame; this cannot happen if the frame is obviously new. When painting and frame appear as a single object, the painting can be more readily experienced as a three-dimensional thing, the original work of art rather than an image that could be looked at in a book or on a screen.⁷⁹

Close examination of the replica frames made under Schade reveals that there is a consistent and frequently replicated 'aged' look. Before the gilding is applied, artificial cracks and wormholes are made to the gesso. The gilded and burnished frame surface is then knocked to create losses and sanded down so that the red bole is exposed. Although the frames are very convincing, the issue of whether the Gallery is being honest with its publics, renders such actions problematic. This thorny issue is to some extent mitigated by the fact that Schade rarely actually makes a 'reproduction' frame.

Analysis of Schade's reproduction frames reveals that they are not replicas but imaginative responses to known frames. Prime examples of this are the new frames surrounding *The Assumption of the Virgin* by Matteo di Giovanni of 1474 (NG1155) and *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* cartoon by Leonardo da Vinci of

about 1499-1500 (NG6337). We do not know for certain how The Assumption of the Virgin was originally presented, only that it was part of a larger altarpiece (The Asciano Altarpiece, 1474), which would have included a number of subsidiary panels depicting Saint Augustine, Saint Michael the Archangel, Saint Agatha, Saint Lucy, Archangel Gabriel and Saint Monica, now dispersed through various museum collections. 80 The original framing solution has also been lost. The new frame, which conceals the fragmented nature of the painting, was created by copying and merging two frames associated with other works by Matteo: firstly the original frame to the two side panels of the same altarpiece (Fig. 147), both of which are in the Museo di Palazzo Corboli in Asciano, and secondly the feathered decoration on what remains of the frame to Matteo's side wings from another altarpiece depicting Saints Peter and Paul, and Saint John the Baptist now in the Museo Civico in Sansepolcro (Fig. 148). The new frame (Fig. 149), being a reproduction of parts of two frames, is not a reproduction of a known frame but a new object and an invention in itself. More problematic in terms of the frame's status for viewers is that the surface of the new frame was 'aged' by distressing the gilding, exposing red bole and simulating losses and wormholes. This surface, combined with the historically accurate carving, deceives the viewer into thinking the frame is original to the painting. Borrowing from Brandi's terms, the frame apparently erases lapsed time. 81 On the other hand, it might be argued that the frame provides an appropriate temporal and stylistic context for the Assumption while also adapting to and concealing its fragmented appearance today in such a way that allows it to be enjoyed in aesthetic terms as a complete object. Having said that, a non-aged frame could have done this just as well, and less misleadingly, as is evident in the case of the Pistoia altarpiece, which does not appear to be 'old'.

It is unusual to frame a preparatory drawing. However, *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* warrants it as the only surviving large-scale drawing by Leonardo da Vinci contained in an art gallery and one that might even have been displayed at the Convent of Santissima Annunziata in Florence in 1510. ⁸² Previously, it had been framed in a twentieth-century leaf ornamented frame. As a



- 147. Matteo di Giovanni, The Assumption of the Virgin with side panels (see Fig. 149). Arrangement with side panels for the National Gallery exhibition Renaissance Siena: Art for a City in 2007-8
- 148. Digital reconstruction of Matteo di Giovanni's Altarpiece of San Giovanni d'Afra with Piero della Francesca's Baptism of Christ (see Fig. 112)





149. Matteo di Giovanni, *The Assumption* of the Virgin, probably 1474, National Gallery, London (part-modern frame)

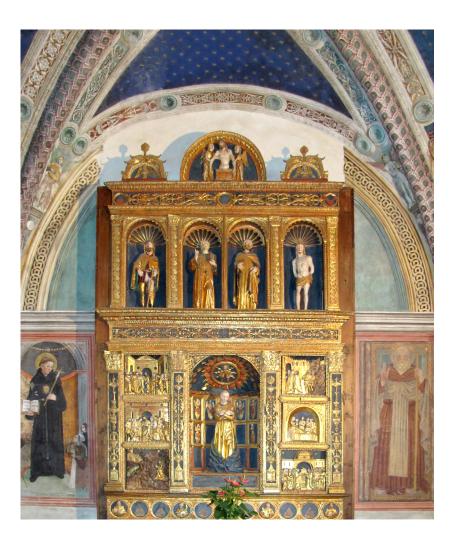
150. Leonardo da Vinci, The Burlington House Cartoon, about 1499-1500, National Gallery, London (modern frame) result of the temporary exhibition in 2011, the National Gallery chose to frame the Leonardo cartoon as one might a painting, in an enlarged version of a Florentine tabernacle frame of about 1550-1570 modelled on that from the Samuel. H. Kress Foundation (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Fig. 150). The frame style, which is clearly indebted to a Michelangelesque architectural vocabulary, is some fifty years later than the cartoon.⁸³ Nonetheless, the tabernacle frame, which is associated with the sacred realm, can be viewed as suitable for a depiction of the Virgin and Child with Saint Anne, and its proportions and design are sufficiently impressive to surround a drawing of such extraordinary status. It might be argued that, as an aged replica, the frame falls within Brandi's category of being both a 'historical' and aesthetic fraud. However, in this case, the frame could never be the 'real thing', the nature of this being unknown, and indeed, it may never have been framed. 84 The fact that the frame is deliberately anachronistic to the drawing in terms of date allows it to more clearly reference how Giorgio Vasari framed his own collection of drawings in the sixteenth century with drawn frames. 85 For those aware of this early appreciation of drawings, the frame becomes a self-conscious commentary on the reception of Leonardo as an artist and draughtsman, as well as on the exceptional status of this drawing in the twenty-first century at the National Gallery.

PALIMPSESTS

Palimpsest frames, as combinations of old and new, occupy a distinct position, falling between antique and reproduction frames. The nineteenth-century Neo-Renaissance frame, based on the portal of San Giobbe in Venice, that surrounded Leonardo's *The Virgin of the Rocks* (NG1093) was replaced in 2010 at the same time as the painting was cleaned and retouched. The reason given for the removal of the frame (discussed in Chapter 4) was that although it was sympathetic in style to a Renaissance frame, it was not truly contemporary with the picture. Renaissance frame is a palimpsest. In light of what we know about the original polyptych of which *The*







- 151. Leonardo da Vinci, The Virgin of the Rocks, about 1491/2-9 and 1506-8, National Gallery, London (composite frame)
- 152. Giacomo del Maino and workshop, Altar of the Immaculate Conception, after 1495, Church of San Maurizio, Ponte in Valtellina

Virgin of the Rocks is a part (Fig. 151), it is fitting that the blue and gold pilasters and cornice, which form the main body of the new frame, date from the early-sixteenth century and originate from a Northern Italian tabernacle frame. ⁸⁷ Their ornament and finish are characteristic of the frames that were used in Milan at the time and place where Leonardo painted the Virgin of the Rocks. In order to transform these fragments into a frame, new parts had to be added. This required visual evidence of sixteenth-century altarpiece frames.

The *Virgin of the Rocks* was originally part of a much larger and highly ornate altarpiece structure carved by Giacomo del Maino for the chapel of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception in Milan. ⁸⁸ The model for the new frame ornament was taken from another altarpiece known to be carved by Giacomo del Maino in San Maurizio at Ponte in Valtellina (Fig. 152). ⁸⁹ The old parts, namely the pilasters and cornice (which had come from a picture frame)

were then integrated into the new structure. The 'new' frame was subsequently gilded, toned and aged to create the illusion of a single old frame rather than a palimpsest, although from close up old and new remain distinguishable. 90 Schade maintains that by replicating the ornament and finish of the Ponte in Valentina altarpiece in a new frame, both provenance and 'a flavour' of the original setting have been suggested. 91 Moreover, it has been argued that the bright blue and gold in the frame highlights Leonardo's deliberate omission of strong colour and heightens the sense of relief, implying that the frame restores some sense of the original appearance of the panel.⁹² This point returns us to the second chapter, in which the gilded surfaces of frames were toned down to ensure colour was correctly received in the viewer's eye. However, both the nineteenth-century sections and the new parts still convert the Virgin of the Rocks into a single-field altarpiece, creating a new setting for it and undermining the idea that a more 'authentic' viewing experience has been recreated.

Each re-framing adapts to how the National Gallery's panels appear now which, as we have seen, is often radically different to how they would have looked in their Renaissance settings. Importantly, the 'new' frames often conceal the physical changes that the paintings have undergone, so that the visitor is not made aware of their compromised or fragmentary state especially in the context of the National Gallery's history, and arguably both the frame and painting are transformed. This could be problematic to future visitors and art historians if they assume that Schade's re-framings are original. Conversely it becomes evident from the analysis above that while Schade may claim his re-framing policy restores paintings to their historical settings, his choices become aesthetic interventions, made using historical frames, fragments and copies of them. It is possible, then, to draw a distinction between the presence and the apparent presence of original frames in the National Gallery introduced by Peter Schade, and frames which attempt to reassemble the structural and perceptual elements of framing, which can be associated with John England.



THE NATIONAL GALLERY IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

As stated in the introduction, the National Gallery's re-framing activities offer a rich case study through which to understand the processes and impact of re-framing, but they should not be studied in isolation. Such an approach risks underestimating the broader international context in which a major national museum operates, particularly in the context of exhibitions and international loans. In the following paragraphs I examine the motivating factors determining re-framing decisions in comparable institutions to the National Gallery: the Victoria and Albert Museum and Tate Britain in England; the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Alte Pinakothek in Munich. This mode of enquiry will further our understanding of whether it matters if a replica or original frame is used to re-frame a picture. Of course, it should be remembered at the outset that the institutions listed display different types of collections to the National Gallery and have varied institutional aims. Furthermore, we should note that the National Gallery is the only institution among the group which adapts antique frames irreversibly.

Zoë Allen, Senior Frames Conservator at the Victoria and Albert Museum has outlined the decision-making processes informing the re-framing of the Virgin and Child by Carlo Crivelli (Victoria and Albert Museum, London). The panel was acquired without a frame by the museum in 1882 and remained unframed until 1937. Allen explains that the frame applied in 1937 has now been removed because it was not considered to complement the painting nor to be 'in keeping' with the (lost) original frame of the panel. 93 A historical photograph (Fig. 153) shows that the frame applied in the 1930s was all'antica in form, with fluted columns and egg-and-dart to the entablature. The visible slip around the painting is indicative of a general policy of not cutting historical frames. Allen explains that a 'suitable' frame was located in the stores of the Victoria and Albert Museum. By 'suitable', she means a frame of a similar age to the Crivelli panel and one possibly not totally dissimilar to its first frame. This late fifteenth-century blue and gold tabernacle frame was not, however, used because it was too large and in a too poor condition, factors

153. Carlo Crivelli, Virgin and Child (see Fig. 154) (sixteenth-century tabernacle frame



which seem to undermine the notion of 'suitability'. Instead, a reduced-sized copy of the tabernacle frame was created in composition (Fig. 154). The new frame was then 'gently distressed'. 94 In comparison to Schade's frames, the frame in the Victoria and Albert Museum can be described as a replica rather than a reinterpretation of a Renaissance frame. This case study reiterates that while it is possible to create good copies of Renaissance frames, recreating lost framing solutions is fundamentally problematic. But what has actually been achieved through the re-framing? Both frames are *all'antica* in style and tabernacles appropriate for the subject of the Virgin and Child. However, the delicacy of the ornament on the 'new' frame is far more in keeping with the pattern on the Virgin's cloak and the scale of the painting. The absence of a slip brings the panel further forward so that the figures enter the spectator's space, offering an enhanced view-



154. Carlo Crivelli, Virgin and Child, about 1480, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (replica of a fifteenth-century tabernacle frame)

ing opportunity in the context of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The Framing Department at the Tate have taken the unusual step of writing a formal framing policy, based on the challenges they faced in re-framing the Turner Bequest. Gerry Alabone, Head of Framing, states that the Tate's re-framing policy seeks to achieve two main aims. Firstly, to narrate the history of the painting and secondly, to enable the viewer to appreciate it. He claims that the earliest known frame to a painting is always the most significant, and when it is known for certain what the supposed missing frame would have looked like, a replica should be made of it. Within this policy, there is still sufficient justification to retain collectors' frames

as they can narrate a certain aspect of the painting's history. The Tate, like the Victoria and Albert Museum, ages replicas to a 'slight degree' in order to create a convincing whole, but seeks to ensure that visitors realise that the frame is not original.⁹⁷ It is interesting that Alabone argues that a frame associated with a particular artist, in this case Turner, should not be copied for a painting that is not linked to Turner.⁹⁸ This recommendation challenges Schade's use of old frames and copies of them to surround paintings for which they were never intended.

Turning to the international scene, the Rijksmuseum has recently commissioned new seventeenth-century style ebonised frames to re-frame their Dutch seventeenth-century paintings, in an attempt to introduce 'authentic re-framing' to the museum. 99 The Head of Conservation, Hubert Baija, comments 'with so many paintings ... in French Louis XIV and Régence frames on seventeenth-century Dutch paintings we prefer to put them in seventeenth-century Dutch frames if we can'. The only existing 'anachronistic' frames that survived this re-framing campaign were those that reflected collecting history 'or another important historical context' of the painting'. 101 One could argue that the French seventeenth-century frames that Baija and his colleagues have removed do, in fact, represent how Dutch seventeenth-century paintings were displayed in the nineteenth century and, therefore, could be claimed to be equally legitimate, if not more so, than reproductions of historical frames. Importantly, Baija stresses that old frames are not adapted, 'just as adapting the size of a painting to fit the dimensions of a frame would [not] be [done]' - a statement which reflects his view of the equal status of frames and paintings. 102 He concluded his interview by stating that 'Frames are no longer utility items that can disappear from the museum unnoticed'. 103

Another interesting and recent comparison is the re-framing of Raphael's *The Canigiani Holy Family* by staff at the Alte Pinakothek in Munich (Fig. 155). The altarpiece was commissioned by the Florentine merchant Domenico Canigiani. The newly made frame comprises fluted pilasters with composite capitals and a richly moulded architrave ornamented with the egg-and-dart motif. It has red-stencilled decoration to the entablature. The frame seems to resemble



closely the *all'antica* frames in the Brunelleschi-designed Basilica of Santo Spirito in Florence and thus makes an immediate visual relationship with the frame surrounding the National Gallery's Pistoia *Santa Trinità* altarpiece of 1455-60 by Pesellino and Fra Filippo Lippi (L15; NG727; NG3162; NG3230; NG4428; NG4868), commissioned by the National Gallery from Duveen at the beginning of the twentieth century. The decision to re-frame *The Canigiani Holy Family* in a Florentine style *all'antica* frame similar to frames made in about 1500 suggests a desire to locate it in its original historical context. The *all'antica* frame also demonstrates the reverence in which Raphael is held, rendering the painting the focal point of the room, while interacting with the composition. But what is truly revealing is that the immediate model was not a fifteenth-century

155. Raphael, The Canigiani Holy Family, about 1505/6, Alte Pinakothek, Munich (modern all'antica frame)

frame but a twentieth-century copy of an *all'antica* frame. The press release states that both an original frame and an exact copy were considered too 'voluminous' for the museum space. In this instance, it appears that the needs of the museum environment superseded a desire for 'authenticity'. ¹⁰⁵

We might conclude from the non-National Gallery case studies above that all of these re-framing approaches aim to create something that is suitable for a museum interior. Arguably, they are no more appropriate on a visual level than the frames that Schade makes and adapts, but they do have a stronger ethical underpinning. One cannot ignore that there is quite simply a central problem – an exact replica of a frame can never convey the lost aura of an original frame even if it is known what it looked like and, where it is not known, a replacement frame is generally the result of aesthetic, rather than historical judgment. It is revealing that few leading institutions wish to narrate the collecting history of their paintings through frames, but prefer to present them as if in the first and unaltered state.

Assessing the value of frames at the National Gallery

In *The Art of the Picture Frame*, Jacob Simon briefly examined contemporary re-framing policies in museums and art galleries. He questions how 'historically appropriate' it is to acquire frames of the same period and origin as the painting. ¹⁰⁶ As he correctly maintains, so-called historically appropriate frames are, in fact, a clear manifestation of a subjective judgement and taste. ¹⁰⁷ On this premise, he argues that this policy should not become a default option and appeals to curators and framers to consider the motivations that might have lain behind the selection of an existing frame. ¹⁰⁸ Simon's recommendations are logical, but, as my thesis has established, explicit motivations in regard to re-framing decisions are rarely mentioned, although convincing and fruitful hypotheses might be drawn. So how might the value, conceived as historically infused, of an existing frame be determined? ¹⁰⁹

This thesis has demonstrated that the historio-aesthetic values

of a frame can lie in the value of the frame itself, based on a judgement of its quality or association with a particular maker, in the relationship between the frame and its collector or patron, and its historical association with a painting. To expand on these categories, firstly, there are frames in the National Gallery which are identified as being particularly fine examples of the styles that they represent but which have no original connection to the paintings which they now surround. A number of these frames were collected by the Victoria and Albert Museum (formerly South Kensington Museum), during the 1850s and 1860s, as outstanding examples of ornament and borrowed by Sir Kenneth Clark on behalf of the National Gallery in 1938. The fifteenth-century all'antica frame surrounding The Virgin and Child with an Angel by an imitator of Filippo Lippi (NG589) has been described as, 'superbly carved, especially in the feathery acanthus which sweeps up under the fluted scrolls of the corbel support'. This frame was selected by Clark because of its exemplary carving and also because it did not require adapting to fit the painting. It is odd that the Gallery used this frame when the original frame still surrounded it, perhaps because it was deemed to be of higher quality. Alternatively, the original frame might have been so covered in oil gilding that it was assumed to be nineteenth-century. Thus, although the frame is not original to the painting, it has two types of value. One is historical, because it is linked to Clark's Directorship at a key moment in the National Gallery's twentieth-century development just before the Second World War, and because of its survival as a fifteenth-century frame. It also has a visual value linked to its perceived quality as a rare carved frame.

The nineteenth-century frame surrounding the *Virgin and Child with Saints* by Pisanello (NG776) (Fig. 34) is an example of the second type of criteria concerning the eligibility of a frame to remain on display in the National Gallery's collections. It has acquired historical value through its connection with a collector. In Chapter 2, it was demonstrated that this frame is inextricably connected with Sir Charles Eastlake, the Gallery's first Director, and his connoisseurial concerns.¹¹¹ The frame acquires importance because of these associations, and not because it exemplifies a particular style

or quality. In an aforementioned interview with Lynn Roberts, Peter Schade commented:

Some later frames are of greater historical interest, such as the frame for Pisanello *The Virgin and Child with Saints Anthony Abbot and George* (NG776), which was designed by Sir Charles Eastlake for the painting. I don't think that the frame is suitable for the painting, but it will probably not be changed. 112

I would argue that the frame is in fact suitable. As I established in Chapter 2, the portrait medals in the frame refer to the patron and artist of the painting, as would a museum label. The frame also conveys a clear sense of nineteenth-century taste to the twenty-first-century visitor, showing Pisanello (in nineteenth-century terms) as transitional, being both associated with the Gothic, signified by the 'pinnacles' and 'Renaissance', on account of the portrait medals.

The issue of the value of collectors' frames and their place in the National Gallery is nuanced. For Schade, the Pisanello frame is not suitable, but cannot be removed because of its associations with Eastlake. Schade's opinion on collectors' frames changes according to what he perceives to be the quality of a frame, as his comments on the frame surrounding *The Adoration of the Golden Calf* (NG5597) by Poussin show. The frame, as Roberts maintained in her interview with Schade, is clearly not compatible with how Poussin had his paintings framed. However, Schade describes the French seventeenth–century frame of this painting as 'of the highest quality – probably, in terms of specialised craftsmanship, it's the best frame that we have in the entire gallery'. ¹¹³

The quality of the frame, combined with the fact that Schade believes that it is 'not distracting', means that it is judged on different terms to the Pisanello frame (NG776). This distinction is revealing. Although both frames narrate the collecting histories of the paintings they surround, they are accorded a different status based on their perceived quality and how they intervene in the viewing experience.

Finally, frames acquire value because of the paintings they are, or have been, associated with, particularly if they are original. One example of this is the original frame surrounding *La Madonna della Rondine* by Carlo Crivelli (NG724.1-2) (Fig. 20). Although the frame surface was substantially altered in the twentieth century, the frame is still viewed as 'original'. Its value lies in its ability to inform visitors and scholars of the original presentation of the altarpiece, despite the fact that it has been wrenched from its first architectural context. In all three instances, the frames in question would not be removed from display or from the paintings they surround. This thesis demonstrates that a fourth 'value' can be added to this list. Frames should be evaluated according to what they can tell us about the history of the institution of which they are a part, especially if they communicate something of the history of display and taste. But when frames are removed, should they be replaced with an authentic old frame or with a replica?

OLD FRAMES OR REPRODUCTIONS?

As Chapter I clearly demonstrates, there has been a notable increase in exhibitions and publications on frames and framing since 1980. This literature exhibits and exposes the central tension that plays out in framing policy and beyond: that of privileging antique and original frames over replicas or 'anachronistic' collectors' frames. The Director of the National Gallery, Nicholas Penny, has drawn attention to the importance of collectors' frames but at the National Gallery (mainly at curatorial level), amongst frame dealers and beyond, a clear preference for the 'authentic' object still dominates. This preference does not extend to other comparable institutions. This phenomenon might be explained by the concept of 'aura' outlined by Walter Benjamin in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1968). In this seminal essay Benjamin argued that aura was 'its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership ... The presence of the original is the pre-



requisite to the concept of authenticity'. 115

It appears that Peter Schade and frame-dealers, such as Wiggins & Son, wish to harness what they view as the aura emanating from original frames. In turn they employ it to heighten the aura of the paintings they contain and simultaneously to underline their authenticity and impact.

The new frame for the Dresden 'Sistine Madonna' by Raphael, made by the Munich frame-maker Werner Mürrer, demonstrates that reproduction frames can serve the purposes which Schade believes only antique frames can (Fig. 156). 116 Leonée Ormond reviewing the exhibition celebrating the 500th Anniversary of Raphael's Sistine Madonna, described the new replica frame as, 'more in keeping with its original purpose as an altarpiece' and continued, 'with well-directed lighting, the Virgin and Child appear to be looking out from clouds'. 117 Artificial ageing of the frame is considered necessary because it helps to prevent uncomfortable visual ruptures, as the viewer's eyes travel from the picture surface to the frame surface and back again. 118 Ormond's observations underline that Mürrer's artificially-aged frame gives visitors a sense of the function of the altarpiece and assists with viewing. The question might be settled by deciding what is more important to the National Gallery and its visitors: maintaining but not using historical picture frames; wanting visitors to feel they have had an authentic viewing experience; or privileging either the aesthetic or the educational function. This question has never been definitively answered.

It is puzzling that the implications of adapting historical frames for paintings for which they were never intended have not yet been analysed in detail. Instead, conservation theorists, including Cesare Brandi, have focused on whether authentic re-framings are created by using antique frames. In relation to Brandi, this is because he considered frames in relation to their spatial connections rather than from a historical standpoint. There is one exception to this *lacuna*. Marco Ciatti, conservator and Soprintendente at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence, argues that frames must be considered objects in their own right, rather than simply playing a supporting role. He nuances this issue by maintaining that their conservation depends to a certain extent on whether the frame is integral to the

156. Raphael, *The Sistine Madonna*, 1513–14, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden (modern all'antica frame) painting or not. Ciatti argues that if the frame is integral, it should be conserved as a painting would be. ¹²¹ Nonetheless he emphasises that regardless of whether the frame is integral or attached, any interventions made to it must be reversible; something that does not happen at the National Gallery. ¹²²

The Victoria and Albert Museum, Rijksmuseum and Tate would not cut or extend a historical frame but choose to make slightly 'aged' replicas of them. This finding complicates the idea that the status of frames depends on the type of institution in which they are kept. The Tate, Rijksmuseum and the National Gallery are all picture galleries and, therefore, should perhaps pursue the same re-framing policy. And as Schade has adopted a radically different attitude to antique frames to John England, it would appear that the status of frames at given institutions depends on individuals and their training as well as the influence or interest of the Director. Schade worked for commercial framers and dealers before joining the National Gallery, whereas England adhered to conservation ethics suitable to his work as a conservation officer, resulting in very different framing solutions. The fact that frames are amongst the only objects with a museological status whose treatment is left to individuals rather than policy, is revealing. Could this problem be addressed by defining frames as either part of the picture or as furniture, as Bjerre posited?¹²³ I would suggest 'no'. If frames are considered to be part of the paintings they surround, then even very poor-quality frames would have to be kept and preserved. Instead, to my way of thinking, framing policy should strike a calculated balance between supporting the types of narratives an institution wishes to tell about its collections, and protecting and, indeed, using historical frames. 124

If the chosen narrative is contextual as well as aesthetic, as it is at the National Gallery, I would argue that replica frames can fulfil the functions of antique ones, especially if, as seems to be the case, only highly trained specialists can discern the difference. It may also be futile to try to use frames to perpetuate the idea that we are looking at the paintings in the Sainsbury Wing as audiences would have done so five hundred years ago. The religious works in the Sainsbury Wing no longer fulfil devotional functions, instead, they have become artworks in an art gallery and as such could as well be presented in

non-period frames. This reasoning can be countered by the claim that by presenting paintings in frames that either are, or purport to be, of the same period and date, an aesthetic and historical whole is created which facilitates effective looking. This argument is inextricably linked to the conservation approaches applied to paintings employed at the National Gallery.

The National Gallery's *Technical Bulletin* outlines its approach to restoration and conservation. An article of 2000 entitled, 'The Restoration of Lorenzo Monaco's 'Coronation of the Virgin': Retouching and Display', makes a number of revealing points in relation to the issue of authenticity and restoration. ¹²⁵ The authors describe later interventions, i.e. those not made by the artist, as 'distortions'. The argument for their removal is that they affect the panel's 'intended composition and hence its true visual impact'. ¹²⁶ There is also an aesthetic aspect to the cleaning process. Varnish layers were removed to enhance the 'cooler end of the colour spectrum'. ¹²⁷ In the concluding paragraphs, the authors discuss the connection between invention and restoration, stating that 'invention in a restoration context should be firmly grounded in study of the original artist's technique and style in other paintings or drawings – in other words, it must start from a highly educated hypothesis'. ¹²⁸

One can see that Peter Schade's approach to re-framing complements, to some degree, that of his colleagues in the picture restoration studios (they are run as two separate departments). Schade seeks to ensure that his newly added frames enable the paintings to retain, or rather recover, their original visual impact, and his 'inventions' are based on 'educated hypothesis'. The fundamental difference is that where the paintings are redisplayed in a way that is said to be close to their 'original' condition, Schade artificially ages the new frames he makes. This creates a rupture in terms of time – the panels apparently rooted to their fifteenth– and sixteenth–century appearances and the frames, seemingly five hundred years old. This state of affairs would not be a problem *per se* if the public were made aware of the actual dates of the frames they were viewing, in the form of labels, as they are at the Uffizi in Florence.

This thesis has created a clear understanding of how the variety of frames on display came into being and heightened appreciation

of the roles and functions given to them. It is my fear that a desire to bring harmony to framing at the National Gallery will result in anything other than 'original' frames being removed, excluding those that seem original. Such an action would risk introducing a level of harmony and indeed uniformity to framing that might not have existed in a Renaissance chapel, palace or casa. It is clear from recent catalogues that Victorian frames are still regarded as 'modern' and could possibly be consigned to basement stores after the retirement of Nicholas Penny. 129 I have shown that these frames not only act as a commentary on taste, collecting and collectors and the reception of the Renaissance in the nineteenth century, but are historic objects in their own right. On the other hand, reusing antique frames and employing interpretations of them allows visitors to immerse themselves in the 'Renaissance'. By this, I mean that they do not simply look at 'Renaissance' paintings but feel them. This observation highlights one of the key aims of museums and galleries, which is to enable visitors to experience real objects. The paradox here is that when they are viewing frames made by Schade, what they see is, in fact, an aesthetically pleasing confection. Ultimately, the needs of the visitor must be balanced with conservation principles. This could be achieved by increasing the amount of interpretative material on frames and framing in the Gallery, so that the beholder is informed about what they are looking at. Further research might be undertaken that asks visitors to respond to different frames around the same paintings. If their responses indicate that one particular mode of re-framing leads to an enhanced viewing experience, then that might be justification for removing a specific type of frame.

- [1] NGFD: NG292.
- [2] NGFD: NG293.
- [3] RNW Diary, 2 July 1857.
- [4] NGFD: NG1093.
- [5] Brandi (1956) 2000master, 57.
- [6] Humfrey, 'Early Italian altarpieces', 2011, 685.
- [7] National Gallery, Master Plan, 2006, 5.
- [8] Penny 1997, 4.
- [9] Dunkerton et al., 1991, 154-161.
- [10] National Gallery 2006, 6.
- [11] Ibid., 10.
- [12] Ibid., 8.
- [13] See Appendix 2 for information on Paul Levi.
- [14] Cannon-Brookes, 'Paul Levi: Picture Frame-maker and Dealer Expert in Traditional Techniques', The Independent, Wednesday 31 December 2008.
- [15] Wilson, A Guide to the Sainsbury Wing at the National Gallery, 1991, 36-37.
- [16] National Gallery, The National Gallery Report, 1982-1984,44.
- [17] See Chapter 3, 164-5.
- [18] Eastlake 1845, 6.
- [19] Barker and Thomas 1999, 88. See also Taunton, 'The Refurbishment of E. M. Barry's Rooms in the National Gallery', 1987, 121.
- [20] Barringer, 'Victorian Culture', 2006, 141.
- [21] Ibid.
- [22] Wilson 1991, 7 and Barker and Thomas 1999, 74.
- [23] MacGregor, 'Foreword', 1991, 7.
- [24] Wilson 1991, 25.
- [25] Ibid., 35.
- [26] Ibid., 35.
- [27] Ibid., 10.
- [28] Ibid., 35.
- [29] Tzortzi, 'Building and Exhibition Layout: Sainsbury Wing compared with Castelvecchio', 2004, 138.
- [30] See Chapter 1, 34-40.
- [31] Audio guide listened to 24 March 2014.
- [32] National Gallery, Annual Review, 1980-1981, 78.
- [33] *Ibid*.
- [34] Wilson 1991, 36-37.
- [35] National Gallery Annual Review, 1985-1987, 47.
- [36] NG website: 'Restoration reveals hidden Titian portrait in the National Gallery collection' http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/hidden-titian-portrait-in-national-gallery-collection (accessed I September 2014).
- [37] National Gallery, Annual Review, 2002-2004.
- [38] National Gallery, Annual Review, 1980-1981, 78.
- [39] Email to author from Peter Schade 6 August 2012.
- [40] For this discussion, see Chapter 5.
- [41] National Gallery, Annual Review, 1978-1979, 75-77.

- [42] Baker and Henry 1995, 122.
- [43] National Gallery, *Annual Review*, 1978–1979, 75–77. For a definition of 'Bole' see Appendix 1.
- [44] NGFD: NG581.
- [45] National Gallery, Annual Review, 1978-1979, 75-77.
- [46] Avery-Quash, 'Collector Connoisseurs', 2011, 294.
- [47] Ibid., 295.
- [48] This was particularly effective. Peter Humfrey stated, 'Complete (or near complete) altarpieces are raised waist-height on altar-like bases, giving a sense of their original placing at the centre of a liturgical performance and offering a viewpoint approximating to what was intended'. While the low light levels evoked 'the mystery of a church interior'. Humfrey 2011, 684-685.
- [49] National Gallery, Press Release Devotion by Design, 28 March 2011.
- [50] Gayford, 'Devotion by Design', 2011. Ricketts would have argued against this, see Chapter 5.
- [51] Term taken from Branham, 'Sacrality and Aura in the Museum', 1994/1995, 33-47.
- [52] Shearman 1992, 96.
- [53] White, Duccio: Tuscan Art and the Medieval workshop, 1979, 80.
- [54] Avery-Quash 2003, xxv-xxxix.
- [55] Davies, National Gallery Catalogues, 1961, 414 and Baker and Henry 1995, 527.
- [56] Gardner von Teuffel, 'Sebastiano del Piombo', 2005c, 262.
- [57] *Ibid*.
- [58] Ibid.
- [59] In conversation with the author 19 March 2012.
- [60] Brandi (1956) 2000, 56.
- [61] In conversation with the author 5 April 2011.
- [62] Brandi (1956) 2000, 56.
- [63] *Ibid*.
- [64] *Ibid*.
- [65] The Frame Blog: 'National Gallery Frames: An interview with Peter Schade' http://theframeblog.wordpress.com/2014/03/22/national-gallery-frames-an-interview-with-peter-schade/
- [66] Ibid. Schade has worked for Wiggins & Son and Paul Mitchell Ltd.
- [67] Christie's International Magazine 1989, 20.
- [68] *Ibid*
- [69] Rollo Whately: http://rollowhately.com/services.html.
- [70] *Ibid*.
- [71] Email to author from the Kimbell Art Museum, 10 May 2011.
- [72] Penny 2004, 179.
- [73] Schade, 'Frames', 2008, 24.

[74]	The Frame Blog: 'National Gallery Frames'.		Pinakothek, Munich.
[75]	Ibid.	[106]	Simon 1996, 27.
[76]	For example, Campbell 1997.	[107]	Ibid.
[77]	Goffen 1989, 82.	[108]	Ibid., 29.
[78]	The Frame Blog; 'National Gallery Frames'.	[109]	The connection between frames and their value was
[79]	Ibid.		clarified in a paper given by Satu Rantala (Independent
[80]	Syson et al., Renaissance Siena, 2007, 126-131.		researcher, Finland) entitled 'Picture Frame as a Com-
[81]	Brandi (1956) 2000, 69.		municator - The Museal Value of Frames and Status in
[82]	Syson et al., 2007, 289.		Collections' (Association of Art Historian conference
[83]	Bisacca et al, 1990, 53.		2014 – 'Within a frame. Boundary, interaction and tran-
[84]	Brandi (1856) 2000, 68.		sition between art and its surroundings').
[85]	Collobi, Il libro de'disegni del Vasari, 1974.	[110]	Dunkerton et al., 1991, 157.
[86]	Keith et al, 'Leonardo da Vinci's Virgin of the Rocks',	[111]	See Chapter 2, 88.
	2011, 49.	[112]	The Frame Blog: 'National Gallery Frames'.
[87]	Ibid., 50.	[113]	Ibid.
[88]	Ibid., 50.	[114]	Ibid.
[89]	Ibid.	[115]	Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical
[90]	Ibid., 54.		Reproduction', ed. 1968.
[91]	Ibid.	[116]	Mürrer, Ein Rahmen für die Sixtinische Madonna, Munich,
[92]	Ibid.		unpublished 2011, 7. – appears to be missing
[93]	V&A: 'Conservation Case Studies' http://www.vam .	[117]	Ormond, 'The Sistine Madonna', 2012, 596. – appears
	ac.uk/content/articles/c/conservation-case-studies-criv-		to be missing
	elli-virgin-and-child/>.	[118]	Ibid.
[94]	Ibid.	[119]	Brandi (1956), 2000, 125.
[95]	I am grateful to Gerry Alabone for providing me with	[120]	Ciatti, 'Problemi di conservazione e di presentazione
	this information.		dei dipinti: le cornici', 1994, 115.
[96]	Alabone, 'The picture frame', 2009, 60.	[121]	Ibid., 116.
[97]	Ibid.	[122]	Ibid., 125.
[98]	Ibid., 63.	[123]	Bjerre 2008.
[99]	Phillips, Exhibiting Authenticity, 1997, 209.	[124]	On one level, an empty frame is no longer functioning
[100]	Email to the author – 20 April 2014.		as a frame.
[101]	Ibid.	[125]	Ackroyd et al., 'Coronation of the Virgin', 2000, 52.
[102]	Ibid.	[126]	Ibid.
[103]	Ibid.	[127]	Ibid.
[104]	For this discussion see Chapter 5, 309-11.	[128]	Ibid.
[105]	Karl Pfefferle press notice concerning frame - Alte	[129]	For example see entries in Gordon 2003.

Detail of nineteenth-century altar frame (adapted in the late twentieth century) for Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano's *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, about 1502-4, National Gallery, London





Re-thinking re-framing: Using framing histories to theorise frames and framing

This thesis, while focusing on picture frames and framing policy over almost two hundred years, has also been engaged with both physical and conceptual frames, the changing architecture of the art gallery, developments in the art historical discipline and the socio-economic and political environment affecting the institution. It was demonstrated that, although frames frequently go unmentioned in the written sources, they are, nevertheless, inextricably linked to the historical and contemporary concerns of the National Gallery. Indeed, I have argued that, at times, these historical and conceptual concerns were made manifest in the physical frames surrounding Italian Renaissance paintings between 1824 and the present day. In the final pages of my thesis, my research findings and key contributions to knowledge, initially chapter-by-chapter and then in more general terms will be summarised. There is potential for overlap in terms of the conclusions that can be drawn from each chapter. I have sought to avoid repetition but stress that their omission does not indicate their absence. The most important points from my history of framing and re-framing Italian Renaissance panels at the National Gallery are then used to question the

Detail of the nineteenth-century frame for Crivelli's *The Demidoff Altarpiece* (see Fig. 131)

dominant philosophical and theoretical discourses on frames and framing I set out in the first chapter. It will be shown that it is not only the presence of frames which is so crucial to the representation and interpretation of painted images in the National Gallery but also their position as the parergon between the work and the not-the-work. Here it will be argued that the location of frames and framing in this matrix helped to manage the inherent instability associated with removing a Renaissance panel from its original context and displaying it in a secondary, indeed alien, environment. It is maintained that this observation in itself does not offer a sufficient explanation for how and why frames and framing oscillate between 'belonging' to the picture, to the wall and sometimes to both. However, it does show that frames and framing is not only a question of philosophical interest, essentially internal to the semiotics of the 'work of art', but also one that should take into consideration the museum as a social space.

THE IMPACT OF BRINGING THE MARGINS TO THE CENTRE

By taking the frames surrounding Italian Renaissance panels at the National Gallery as my starting point and locating them within the diverse and shifting roles and responsibilities of the institution, I have been able to make an original contribution to our knowledge of the frames themselves, the reception of the Renaissance and the development of the National Gallery. In turn, combining the research findings that emerged from addressing each of these questions, has demonstrated how Italian Renaissance panels are reformed in and by the National Gallery. These investigations have shown that historic and historicising frames might be viewed as attempts to make the presentation of the complex and problematic term 'Renaissance' more manageable and recognisable in the museum and art gallery context.

From the outset, my primary intention was not to add to the corpus of technical literature on frames (although my research clearly has implications for this field) but to suggest that we might think of, and indeed interpret, frames as sources, as we do pa-

per-based archives, which are imbued with traces of the historical, socio-economic, political and art historical concerns of the National Gallery. The complex and multifaceted nature of frames and framing invites this approach. Although it can never be definitively stated whether frames and framing mediate, or separate, we have to consider what they might mediate between or separate, how and why. The focus of this thesis has been the painting as a physical object, the immediate display environment and the social context beyond the National Gallery. As such, my more empirical approach to frames and framing complements essays in *The Rhetoric of the Frame*, which have already emphasised how 'frames' can equally be studied in terms of gendering, semiotic and other abstract terms.²

It is surprising that re-framing, which I have conclusively shown to be an important and overlooked museological tool, has been largely omitted from art historical and museum studies literature. This is a particularly problematic *lacuna* for museology. If we acknowledge the possibility of the disinterested aesthetic experience, even momentarily, as it was accepted in nineteenth- and twentieth-century justifications of the art gallery, then frames and framing become critically important for the rendering of it. Indeed, although authors such as Carol Duncan and Stephen Greenblatt argue that the exhibition of paintings in the National Gallery was intended to facilitate a transformative aesthetic experience, they did not consider in detail the role that frames and framing might have played in this, even though they are decidedly deliberate physical and conceptual interventions to the painting.³ Moreover, as I have shown, it is not the presence of frames per se that are, theoretically at least, vital for the rendering of the aesthetic experience, but rather the design, finish and age of those frames, the relative importance of which factors changes over time and according to the concerns of key agents. Less problematic, but of equal importance and certainly no less contentious, are the art historical roles that frames were thought to be able to perform in a fundamentally, but not exclusively, art historical environment. They ranged from creating a historical context for dislocated panels to positioning new acquisitions within the canon as it was displayed at the National Gallery. In addressing these functions, I have been able to

show how revealing it is to bring the margins to the centre, not only for frame studies but as a means of breaking open the central tension that lies at the heart of any museum or art gallery, which is that objects must appear at some level to belong to their new environments. Any sense of overt rupture between the ergon and the parergon would alert visitors to the fact that the panels, while going 'beyond' their immediate environment in offering an experience of transcendence, do not belong to the museum either, thereby threatening the complex and multifaceted viewing process. The mechanics of ownership, of which frames and framing are a key aspect, fundamentally change what objects are and how they signify and, as such, contribute to historical as well as visual fluctuations in the ergon-parergon matrix.

It is evident that these conclusions would not have been reached had my focus been on the apparent quality of the picture frames, had only looked at original frames to Renaissance panels or, indeed, had accepted Jonathan Conlin's claim that there was a 'disdainful attitude' towards frames and framing until the Directorship of Neil MacGregor. By searching out references to frames and framing in the National Gallery's archive and investigating frames which have been hitherto dismissed by art historians on account of their quality, I have been able to narrate the nuanced and complex history of the re-framing of Italian Renaissance panels at the National Gallery. Ultimately, my research connects how the National Gallery's Italian Renaissance panels have been framed and reframed to the history of taste, aesthetics, art history and the history of the Gallery as an institution. This task has not been undertaken for any other museum or art gallery.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

In Chapter I, a diverse range of publications on frames were brought together to counter any claims that they have been hitherto ignored at the National Gallery or in general. However, exploring changing philosophical discussions engaging frames and framing alongside technical issues relating to frames, the historiography of the Renaissance and the National Gallery was revealing, not only in identifying lacunae, but also in illuminating just how important frames and frameworks are to the perception and reception of objects now considered as artworks. The exploration of original frames to Renaissance panels, for example, provided an understanding of the important role frames had played in aiding devotion as well as how they have been treated in the art historical literature. Even if we restrict ourselves to examining the relatively contained period that we term the 'Renaissance', it is evident that the relationship between picture and frame was complicated, ruptured and altered by internal and external factors, a situation which renders re-framing highly problematic. These factors included changes in taste and the complex motivations of agents dictating the commissioning process. In later chapters, this knowledge offered a means of measuring how far the National Gallery's re-framing policy affected the physical character and conceptual understanding of Renaissance paintings. Specifically, it became of importance to disrupt the idea, perpetuated in current museum framing policy and communicated to the public, that Renaissance paintings were always presented in frames of the same period and age as the panel itself. This re-framing approach leads to the creation of false lives and histories for the panels on display. Chapter I also showed that scholars have not addressed the motivations for and implications of the act of re-framing, nor how framing policies are reached. In particular, nineteenth-century frames have been under-appreciated in general and as a key aspect of the history of museum collecting, commissioning and display. Even the most cursory glance at written archival material held at the National Gallery, and the nineteenth-century frames themselves, suggests that frames and framing not only shape how we view the panels on display but are in themselves constantly under review. As I have discussed, at times there was a clear desire to transform a frame and panel into 'a whole object', while at others rupture between the two was deliberately created through the selection of a frame made in what Hoeniger might describe as a different aesthetic moment to the panel it contained. I would argue that the motivations for these choices are connected to the fundamentally unstable relationship of the ergon and parergon, in this instance the panel and the frame within the wider setting of the National Gallery. We can see the consequences of this instability on frames and framing play out in the remaining chapters. This observation points us to perhaps the most important conclusion to emerge from this chapter, namely the scope there is to consider framing and re-framing histories and practices alongside framing theory over almost two hundred years. Employing this approach compels one to revise how we treat frames as objects and the study of frames and framing. It also demonstrates that fluctuations in the ergon-parergon matrix are governed by a broad range of influences, ranging from changing taste to new understandings of the 'Renaissance' and the international art market, and therefore cannot be understood in exclusively philosophical terms.

Chapter 2 sought to enhance our understanding of Neo-Renaissance frame types, both on a technical and aesthetic level. It was demonstrated that the National Gallery versions were amongst the earliest manifestations of a pan-European type. I also established that the perceived agency of museums and art galleries as being socially transformative in this period was conceived in similar terms to the socially beneficial properties of 'aesthetic' ornament. It was argued that the ornament on the National Gallery's Neo-Renaissance frames can be read in light of the contemporary ornament debates and those concerning the social agency of the museum and in fact mediated the connection between the two. The ornament on these frames was constructed by writers such as Ralph Nicholson Wornum as beautiful and, as such, able to provoke an innate aesthetic response in the viewer within a space that was already considered to have the power to defuse social tension by exposing the working classes to 'beautiful' paintings. Hence the manufacture and use of Neo-Renaissance frames can be viewed as a means of securing the civilizing, cleansing and socially transformative museological agency of the National Gallery. On some level these beautiful borders might have been able to counter dangerous and highly public claims that a number of the early Renaissance panels acquired by Sir Charles Eastlake were neither beautiful and authentic, nor collected with integrity, and were thus unworthy

of public expenditure or display. While Charles Eastlake is a wellknown figure in museology and art history, Ralph Nicholson Wornum is not. This chapter made an important contribution to our knowledge of Wornum's career, his impact on museum administration and aesthetic preferences, while also demonstrating how these three areas intersected and impacted on the design and manufacture of Neo-Renaissance frames at the National Gallery. Fundamentally, it showed that both Wornum and Eastlake were concerned with frames and framing, and consequently that the frames they chose must be treated as historically important objects. In so doing, the close connection between the South Kensington Museum under Sir Henry Cole and the National Gallery was revealed, diminishing the artificial divisions that were drawn between the fine and decorative arts museums in this period. This final observation highlights the continual need for the barriers between the so-called 'fine' and 'decorative' arts to be questioned. Arguably, re-examining frames and framing policies might be a good place to start to do this.

In Chapter 3, the relationship between framing and art history, specifically connoisseurship and historicism, was interrogated. From the outset, it seemed obvious that frames could have been used as a means of fulfilling the nineteenth-century concern that the original display conditions of paintings, including that of Renaissance panels, be communicated in some degree. This approach seems more understandable when one considers that early art historians, including Jacob Burckhardt and Sir Charles Lock Eastlake, were interested in Renaissance frames and framing. Initially, it was surprising to discover that, despite this historical knowledge of Renaissance frame types, there was no attempt to recreate them at the National Gallery during this period. It was suggested that the controversy surrounding the National Gallery's acquisitions policy might explain why only vaguely historically 'appropriate' frames were commissioned, although the effect of a latent hostility towards Anglo-Catholicism should not be forgotten. The use of oil gilding was conceived as a means of controlling the perception of the paintings on display, supposedly recovering their original visual qualities for the viewer while also mitigating controversy surrounding their cleaning. This chapter established that the concept of 'original' was addressed through the act of viewing as a physical and physiological process connected to sight, rather than one that related to original context. These research findings highlight the extent to which frames and framing were used to shape the spectator's experience and understanding of the panels on display at the National Gallery. Equally, it demonstrates how the nineteenth–century visitor was understood to behave in museums and galleries by museum professionals at the time. In subsequent chapters, we saw how conceptions of the National Gallery's visitors changed and the impact these shifts had on framing policy and, subsequently, on the appearance of the Renaissance object.

Chapters 4 and 5 further investigated the connection between frames and framing, art history and the art gallery. The main concern of Chapter 4 was to explore the relationship between frames and canon formation. Taking the specific example of the San Giobbe frames, I showed that framing as a process and frames as objects played a key role in introducing and establishing the Ferrarese School at the National Gallery. The San Giobbe frame type not only created a magnificent surround for Ercole Grandi's' The Virgin and Child Enthroned (NG1119) but also forged a visual connection with The Virgin of the Rocks (NG1093) and the Ansidei Madonna (NG1171), both of which were by firmly established canonical artists (at the National Gallery and beyond). The unapologetic celebration of these altarpiece fragments through the San Giobbe frames also rebuffed any accusations that the paintings were not authentic, an accusation levelled at Leonardo's Virgin of the Rocks, or that they were too expensive as was thought to be the case in relation to The Virgin and Child Enthroned. In being linked to the portal of San Giobbe, the San Giobbe frames were inevitably connected to a more general reappraisal of buildings which were deemed illustrative of the 'Renaissance'. Reconsideration of what constituted the Renaissance canon, whether in art or architecture, highlights the instability of the concept in this period. Identifying this instability enabled me to argue that frames and framing were used to secure the slippery concept of the Renaissance in the National Gallery's displays of Italian Renaissance art. Subsequent generations of framers at, and visitors to, the National Gallery have inherited fifteenth- and sixteenth-century panels fixed in a nineteenth-century version of a 'Renaissance' context. Before any re-framing decisions can be made, we must understand the motivations and art historical concerns that lay behind these nineteenth-century frames, particularly how they relate to the reception of the 'Renaissance'. That is not, however, to say that Victorian frames should not be removed.

In Chapter 5 it was shown that art historical interest in 'appropriate' frames increased as style became a preoccupation of art historians, which, in turn, highlighted the extent to which, and how, the National Gallery responded to German art historical museological models. At the beginning of the twentieth century, German art historians who had studied under Heinrich Wölfflin, began to investigate and show the 'Renaissance style' through museum display. A key element of this methodology, in relation to the display of Renaissance panels, was locating frames of the same period and date for paintings which had lost their original frames, and then displaying them in ways that related to an interest in Renaissance domestic interiors. Realising these goals encouraged an art market for antique frames and a scholarly literature to support judgments made concerning their style and age. I charted how National Gallery personnel, including Trustees, reacted to this model, in order to explore the mechanics of taste formation and dissemination. I then considered how the creation of a complete manifestation of a whole object, that is a panel with an historically appropriate frame, could be used to conceal the fact that objects had not only been displaced but also fragmented, in order that they could enter the museum environment (and to discourage them from leaving it). This chapter, together with Chapter 4, deepened understanding of the relationship between art historical scholarship and museum display. Having said this, it also became apparent that the increased interest in art history at the National Gallery did not trump the importance of the aesthetic experience which Gallery personnel wished to foster for the viewer. Instead, the two concerns co-existed. in part through the selection of historically appropriate picture frames. This chapter further highlighted the processes, motivations

and agents which lie behind the reformulation of the Renaissance object. Frames can thus be viewed as a repository of socio-economic, political, art historical and museological concerns, in short, as objects with a status that might exceed their aesthetic qualities.

Finally, taking the specific example of framing inheritance at the beginning of Chapter 6, I considered how the National Gallery approaches its Victorian past. I sought to show that, although frames and framing might not be named in this as such, intrinsically they touch on many aspects of the Gallery's duties to conserve, educate and display and are therefore integral to how paintings are experienced. It is this situation which leads to frames being replaced and changed. One viewing 'experience' offered to visitors to the National Gallery is the concept of the 'original', a pursuit that is inextricably connected to authenticity. Peter Schade's (Head of Framing at the National Gallery) belief in the possibility of recreating lost original frames must be problematised. There are now standard ways of presenting the Renaissance, i.e. presenting so-called Renaissance panels in so-called Renaissance frames. This phenomenon should concern museum professionals since it influences understanding of the Renaissance object, and results in a general disregard for equally legitimate manifestations of taste and historic conceptualisations of the 'Renaissance'. I stress that I do not believe that Victorian frames should remain on public display permanently. I would argue that it should not be claimed that re-framing decisions recreate original framing solutions or are more authentic than what preceded them. Instead, the introduction of 'new' frames should be viewed as one way of confronting how Italian Renaissance panels can be displayed in the museum environment.

Collectively, these chapters break down the artificial barriers that have divided the fine and decorative arts. Instead, I have developed a research model which shows that frames and framing can be studied in a similar way to any other branch of art or architectural history or museum studies and should indeed be incorporated into these disciplines and thereby broaden their scope. Frames as both ornament and ornamented can be understood as objects, with makers and functions. Equally, we need to take seriously the

other agents that might have governed the appearance, selection and roles assigned to frames at the National Gallery. This mode of inquiry also illuminates the constant and shifting concerns of the institution and shows how, on a broader level, these issues shape museum display and alter museum objects. We can also consider how frames related to their wider contexts, both stylistically in terms of architecture and as a response to socio-economic, political and art historical concerns. Interpreting frames in this way endows them with a new importance and highlights their crucial role in the reception and perception of artworks, which goes beyond how they might facilitate the aesthetic experience. In summary, my research findings suggest that the study of frames in an institutional context should not be constrained to technical studies but be studied in a multifaceted way which complements their intrinsically multifaceted nature. This question is, to my mind, inextricably linked to the relationship between the ergon and the outside, which I explore below.

Applying history to the philosophy of re-framing: ergon, parergon and the museum mission

The essays in *The Rhetoric of the Frame* use specific case studies to interrogate the function of frames and framing in both Kantian and Derridian terms. By contrast, the long durée approach adopted in this thesis confirms and builds upon Lebensztejn's observation that picture frame styles change as framing is called upon to fulfil different functions at various historical moments, a process he sees as being inextricably linked to how the connection between art and reality was conceived in different periods. My historical approach to exploring re-framing at the National Gallery highlights not only that the roles given to both frames and framing change over time, but also shows that these roles are dependent too on the historical moment in which curators and conservators wish to locate and present the paintings they surround. By this I mean whether historical panels are shown in the contemporary context or, alternatively, through the use of historic frames in a museologi-

cal version of their 'original' context. This dilemma is indicative of how problematic the concept and display of the 'real thing' is in the artificial environment of the National Gallery. Equally, it reveals how frames and framing function on a number of conceptual levels, sometimes simultaneously. This observation underlines, once again, the complex nature of frames and framing.

The National Gallery has been and remains a constantly changing environment. It is not only its architecture and interiors which alter, but also the appearance of the surfaces of the paintings, art historical understanding of them, conceptualisation of its publics and even its mission. Such changes have often been justified in defensive terms and, correspondingly, most clearly expressed during periods of intense public criticism. Neither can it be coincidental that re-framing activity at the National Gallery increased at these times. Most problematic is, and was, the tense relationship between the museum and the contextually displaced object, which manifests itself in the practice I have previously coined 'anxious art history'. As we have seen, this phrase encompasses art historical responses through frames and re-framing to anxiety regarding attributions, the legitimacy of acquisitions and controversial physical interventions to the panels. In these concluding paragraphs, I will argue that the positioning of the work in relation to its setting by the picture frame or parergon was conditioned by the anxiety which lay at the heart of the National Gallery's role as an art gallery and consequently to how the visitor was intended to experience Italian Renaissance art within its walls. Ironically, the fundamental instability at the heart of the National Gallery necessitated that the functions given to, and the roles expected of, frames changed, sometimes to the extent that in being inextricably linked to the agenda underpinning their first context, former frames were rendered unsuitable for their new environments and roles, and were, as a consequence, replaced. Paradoxically, then, the apparently stable and stabilising frame is fundamentally volatile and subject to rupture.



PICTURE FRAMES AND FRAMING PHILOSOPHY

As I stated in Chapter 1, philosophers, art historians and frame historians have questioned, and continue to question, the category to which picture frames belong. There are three main positions which relate to the broader philosophical understanding of frames and framing. Kant argued that frames establish and maintain borders and, more widely, sustain dichotomies. When this view is applied to paintings, it is argued by, for example, Simmel and Arnheim (who take a Kantian position), that they facilitate the aesthetic experience by isolating the painting from the everyday world.8 We might also view the frame, as Michael Camille and Pearson and Richard do, as engaging directly dialectically with the centre (here the work) rather than being other to it. The mode of thinking which maintains that the margins affect how the centre is interpreted means that the parergon cannot be considered merely peripheral to the ergon. Alternatively, we could accept that frames mediate between the work and the architectural space, which is extrinsic to it and, perhaps on a broader level, the wider world of which the museum or art gallery is part. At its most extreme, proponents of this idea almost obliterate the distinction between the work, its margins and the outside. Frames, as Derrida maintained in his discussion of the frame as a theoretical object, can also be viewed as dialogic, being neither one thing nor another, but potentially both and sometimes neither. The apparent paradoxes that Derrida alerts us to highlight the complex processes that are implicated by the seemingly uncomplicated presence of the frame. Here, it is my intention to apply the philosophical and abstract within a discourse of the aesthetic to the notion of the frame as a physical thing in a social space. This is to argue against Derrida, who uses the frame to exclude all 'extrinsic' accounts of painting that acknowledge the social. The arguments that developed from my research show that the extrinsic does condition the understanding of the 'work' or at least it was intended to. ¹⁰ In the following paragraphs, I will maintain that the stabilising functions of the frame and the act of framing helped overcome the challenges associated with collecting and displaying Italian Renaissance art at the National Gallery. It follows that the frame's relationship to the work and to the environment would change as Italian Renaissance panels were reinterpreted by new generations of curators and visitors, who occupy ever changing social worlds.

As I have already demonstrated, even in their original context, particularly that of the church or chapel, Italian Renaissance panels could in some senses be viewed as in tension, as pulling away from either the wider architectural environment given to them or their frame. This situation is unsurprising given that contracts, relating to the commissioning process, demonstrate that panels, frames and architectural spaces were infrequently conceived as a single harmonious entity as they were under Brunelleschi at San Lorenzo or later at Santo Spirito in Florence. To For example, although Bellini's Saint Catherine of Siena altarpiece was displayed in a classicising frame and might be broadly termed Renaissance in style, it was placed in the Gothic church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, which resulted in a stylistic and implicitly temporal rupture with its immediate environment. Instead, the painting proposes its own architectural environment, a cross vaulted space 'opening' behind the frame. In conceptual or perhaps philosophical terms, we might conceive this instability as a failure on the part of the frame to negotiate the split between the ergon and its environment, relating clearly to the ergon and marking it off from the stylistically different space. The issue of instability between the work and the outside was exacerbated by the fact many panels were radically altered, once they were removed from their ecclesiastical settings, mainly by being cut into saleable parts. As has been previously stated, there were no original frames for these fragments and yet they required a frame and the process of re-framing to embed them institutionally as gallery objects. I would argue that the process of re-framing Italian Renaissance panels at the National Gallery enabled them to be displayed, by mitigating the controversial associations of their presence and transforming them into works of art. In short, frames and framing were used to manage the inevitable tensions that arose when the ergon, that is the panel or painting, was introduced into what was for fifteenth and sixteenth-century paintings an alien setting, i.e. the art gallery. An integral part of this process was the use of frames and framing to ensure that the panels on display seemed to belong to, and were owned by, the National Gallery.

Frederick Mackenzie's depiction of the National Gallery in its first manifestation at Pall Mall clearly suggests that frames were used to connect the paintings on display with the wider decoration of the room (Fig. 4). It can be argued that this process of the frame aligning itself to the 'outside of the work' ensured that, in visual and conceptual terms, the panels and canvases could be perceived to belong to a larger parergon, namely, the interiors they had recently entered. On a meta-level, the selection of frames, which were manifestly stylistically connected to the interior of the room, aligned historical panels with contemporary taste and located them in the present. It can be maintained that these activities minimised the inevitable visual rupture between the painting and setting. The Neo-Renaissance style frames adopted by the National Gallery after 1850 also engaged with what might be termed stylistic and temporal belonging. As I have previously noted, despite the origin of their decoration being Renaissance ornament, this frame type was intended as a specifically nineteenth-century product. Although clearly signalling 'Renaissance Paintings', Neo-Renaissance frames were not intended to form closer aesthetic or temporal links with the paintings they surrounded. Instead, the frames pulled their contents into the nineteenth-century museum space, wider aesthetic discourses and the broader socio-economic and political environment. Conceptually, we can see frames and framing being used (once again) to mediate between the ergon and its setting in order to proclaim in definitive terms that the panel belonged to the nineteenth-century gallery environment. Furthermore, the fact that the ornament on the frames was specific to the National Gallery may also have underlined for some that the panels belonged to it and its publics, rather than any other institutional context. In a different way, the San Giobbe frames were rendered part of the immediate environment, being embedded through their shared ornament and style into the Taylor extension, which was unquestionably nineteenth-century in its style and execution. The process of embedding was important for slightly different reasons outlined in relation to Neo-Renaissance frames. Connecting Lorenzo Costa's *Virgin and Child Enthroned* (NGIII9), which at the time of its acquisition was thought to be by the Ferrarese artist Ercole Grandi, to a display environment in which the central feature was a screen which celebrated canonical artists, helped to introduce a new artist and school into the National Gallery. By contrast, Raphael's *Ansidei Madonna* (NGII7I) was a celebrated acquisition, not least because there was a real risk that it might have been sold to a foreign buyer and so permanently leave British shores. Joining the painting to the Taylor Extension, using the San Giobbe frame, confirmed that this iconic painting belonged to the National Gallery and the nation.

In all three instances, the main concern was to link the frame to the wider setting and, in so doing, bring the ergon indisputably into the art gallery environment, that is, in actual, symbolic and temporal terms. Re-framing in this way helped to transform the ergon into a museological specimen, which could be viewed (to borrow Alpers' terminology) 'appropriately', having been separated, both aesthetically and temporally, from any associations with their former site. Consequently, re-framing could support an important aspect of the museum agenda, although it centres on the idea of the 'inviolable work'. In theoretical terms, joining frames with decorative schemes created a double border which, as Georg Simmel might argue, guarded against the intrusion of the everyday, and thus facilitated, and indeed protected, the aesthetic experience. To accept this claim, we must acknowledge that the Gallery's architecture was considered separate from the everyday too, even though it was (and at times problematically) a clearly social space.

In the instances described above, frames and framing related primarily, I would argue, to what was external to the artwork. This was, however, not always the case, even at the same period, within the same institution. Arguably, the sense, perhaps illusory, that panels belonged to alien environments was strengthened when the frame was linked, whether on an aesthetic or temporal level, to both the work and the gallery setting. One example of this was examined in Chapter 3. The application of oil gilding meant that the surfaces of even old or original frames were forced to adhere to the expectations of contemporary aesthetic taste. More impor-

tantly, and as we have already seen, the frame surface was intended to bridge or harmonise the physical qualities of the museum space with the perceived (and desirable) physical characteristics of the painting. The negotiation between the inside and the outside shows, contrary to Simmel, that even here the duties of the frame are not only to the work and that the glistening border has been toned down to mediate a transition between the work and its setting. I argued that by managing the relationship between the ergon and the Gallery in this way, the visitor would be able to read the paintings on display correctly. In so doing, the results of controversial cleaning were mitigated. As we saw in Chapter 4, so-called 'Watts' frames also engaged with both the inside and outside. Their gilded oak surfaces were intended to provide a suitable physical framework for looking at the paintings within, while their appearance was connected to wider aesthetic debates, that engaged the Arts and Crafts movement. In theory, the presence of Watts frames connected paintings from different schools and provenances to one another, the physical environment of the National Gallery and to contemporary artistic taste, while also facilitating inspection of their contents. Thus, re-framing using Watts frames rendered the paintings that they surrounded part of their nineteenth-century display context, in both aesthetic terms and in how they were thought to be physically received and interpreted by the viewers' eye. Arguably, in both these instances, the result of the mediating function of frames and framing was that the panels became embedded in the physical environment of the National Gallery and were simultaneously rendered more comfortable to the nineteenth-century visitors' perceptual reception of the painting. In essence, the panel was located, displayed and understood in nineteenth-century terms, and frames and framing played a key part in achieving this.

The presence of Victorian frames became unacceptable when the interiors of the National Gallery came to resemble, on some level, even if accidentally, the original environment the paintings were viewed as being part of. This occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the walls of the Italian rooms were painted white, creating an effect which was thought to resemble the interiors of fifteenth-century Florentine churches. Roger Fry noted that this situation created a disjuncture between the Gallery's wall and the paintings. ¹² The art critic's observation highlights that, despite the comments I made above, frames were viewed as being inextricably linked to the National Gallery interiors, rather than the panels they contained, although this situation changed over the course of the century. As we shall see, charting the cause of this change in conceptual terms, reveals more about the complex characteristics of frames and framing.

As I argued in Chapter 5, through Bernard Partridge's caricature 'Hans across the sea' (Fig. 108), inside-outside splits made paintings seem vulnerable to 'capture' by foreign collectors at a time of increased nationalism. Arguably, it was these ruptures which compelled the National Gallery to acquire old frames which connected visually, temporally and stylistically with the paintings they contained and the appearance of its walls. For the first time, the frame was considered predominantly in relation to the age and period of the work rather than the decorative appearance of the walls. The parergon can thus be seen to be moving more closely to the ergon, rather by association with an idea of age than in more abstract aesthetic terms. The efficacy of this strategy was weakened by a lack of suitable frames and the funds to acquire them. Regardless of this, it can be argued that, in the period after 1900 at the National Gallery, the parergon of frames and framing was more closely related to the ergon than the larger setting.

Although I would maintain that the most important factor determining the framing strategy was to create the illusion that Renaissance panels belonged in the National Gallery, there were other motivating considerations. Identifying these causes aids understanding of why frames and framing oscillated between belonging to the outside and the inside of the work, and frequently pertained to both. It should be stated from the outset that the paradoxical nature of frames means that fixed rules cannot be established and what I suggest in the following paragraphs are merely hypotheses. I shall start by outlining potential influencing factors which informed the connection between frames and framing and the gallery environment.

Throughout this thesis, I have drawn the readers' attention to episodes in which the presence of Italian Renaissance panels at the National Gallery was fundamentally problematic. As we have seen, when Sir Charles Lock Eastlake started to collect early Italian paintings, they neither conformed to contemporary ideas of beauty nor, in some instances, were they deemed to have been legitimately acquired. Once these panels entered the National Gallery, there was further criticism concerning their treatment, particularly their cleaning. And, finally, religious paintings were potentially viewed with hostility, on account of latent suspicion of Anglo-Catholicism. Under Sir Frederic Burton, one of the most infamous acquisitions, on account of cost, was Leonardo's The Virgin of the Rocks (NG1093); there were also clearly and publicly expressed doubts regarding its authenticity. Equally, there was widespread criticism of the presence of Ferrarese painting in general, rendering the acquisition of The Virgin and Child Enthroned (NG1119) also fundamentally problematic. By comparison, the need for, and existence of, the National Gallery was never contested during the period 1850 to 1880. In fact, as we saw in, Chapter 4, by the 1880s, it had come to be celebrated as a site of national pride. Neither were the socio-economic and political functions, indeed benefits, of the National Gallery doubted. It therefore stands to reason that frames and framing would connect to the celebrated national institution and its beneficial agency rather than to the far more problematic contents these frames surrounded.

It might be asked why there was a shift that resulted in frames being viewed more as belonging to the artwork than to the wall. I would attribute this to the fact that Italian Renaissance panels became a more acceptable facet of English collecting. By 1900, Italian Renaissance panels had not only been integrated into the National Gallery's collections but also were both celebrated and the subject of competitive collecting on an international level. Changes to the perceived value of Italian Renaissance art meant that its controversial associations were to some extent mitigated. A direct consequence of this change in appreciation was that there was no longer an urgent need to join the panels to a celebrated and socially beneficial building and, indeed, there was arguably increased pressure

to focus the viewer's attention on the panels themselves. This modified taste also corresponded with the inclusion of frames in the new discipline of art history, mainly as a manifestation of changing styles. Old frames were thus accorded a new scholarly and monetary status. In short, Renaissance panels and frames could be interpreted and celebrated in terms of their historical significance. Historically appropriate frames implied that each panel needed to be framed individually, drawing attention to it as a complete historical object and extending its stylistic characteristics into the viewers' space. Fundamentally, instead of Renaissance panels being viewed through a nineteenth-century lens, they were now celebrated as Renaissance objects, and as products of their own time and as part of the Gallery. I would maintain that this continues to be the case today and has led to 'Renaissance' panels being displayed in 'Renaissance' frames. The continuum of the same re-framing policy suggests that the National Gallery's conceptual understanding of frames and framing has remained fundamentally consistent since about 1900. 13

This thesis has been concerned as much with charting changing beliefs on the idea of the picture frame and the act of framing in a single institution as it has been with art history, taste and the agents who shaped displays at the National Gallery. Having said this, I have argued throughout the six chapters that frames and framing as concepts cannot be separated from the functions given to them. Moreover, although it was frequently not expressed as such, the idea of the frame in conceptual terms was central to framing practices at the National Gallery. This observation invites consideration of what frames and framing do today. I would dispute the nineteenth-century idea that frames, alongside other curatorial practices, can transform the viewer or invoke a transcendental aesthetic experience. Instead, I would argue that frames isolate painted images from other artworks and mark them out from the wall, so that they can be inspected by viewers in the social space of the art gallery. In regard to fragments, frames give boundaries to what would otherwise be fractured artworks and help the viewer make sense of them. On some level, frames of the same dates and origins as the panels they surround can also tell us what the objects were, how they functioned and where they came from. Other frames can narrate something of the history of the panel in terms of how it was collected and displayed. In theoretical terms, these arguments allow a variety of re-framing strategies to be displayed in the same place at the same time, as long as they fulfil the main functions outlined above.

LOOKING FORWARD

Regardless of whether frames are conceived as being part of the ergon or the parergon, both or neither, it is evident that frames and framing are (at least in theoretical terms) integral to the viewers' reception of artworks. As I stated in my analysis of the roles and status of frames, it would be beneficial to see how visitors respond to different frames, using qualitative methods of investigation. This would extend our theoretical discussions on the intended functions and effects of frames and framing by powerful agents at the National Gallery into the practical realm and enhance our understanding of the mechanics of spectatorship in the museum environment. My research into frames and framing at the National Gallery could also be enriched through examination of the same research problem in other museum contexts at specific historical moments. One such case study might be how Louis Courajod's (1841-1896) re-framing activities at the Louvre corresponded with his own construction of the 'Renaissance'. It would be worthwhile to know whether similar conclusions would be reached or whether the roles I have attributed to frames and framing are specific to Italian Renaissance panels at the National Gallery. This thesis has shown that frames are an important part of the National Gallery's collection, both as objects in themselves and the narratives they communicate about the institution. Any museum or gallery should consider whether their frames have the potential to communicate similar ideas, when taking re-framing decisions. This would enable policies to be developed in Britain and abroad that preserve and document frames as worthwhile historical, art historical and, at times, architectural objects.

Even if this type of study were to progress no further, I have shown that, although frames might be viewed as decorative art, they occupy a key role in the development of the art historical discipline, its presentation and as objects which can be considered art historical. The study of frames and framing should, therefore, be one component of degrees in Art History and not the preserve of connoisseurs. I would hope that, as a consequence of this, the boundaries of the art historical discipline would be extended. Museum curators should also be made aware of the historical importance of frames as well as their aesthetic qualities. The National Gallery is currently supporting a number of these objectives. Peter Schade delivers a lecture on frames and framing to students on MA programmes run in conjunction with the National Gallery and the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes (in both Art History and Curating). Every new member of staff at the National Gallery is given a tour of the Framing Department. Development, the National Gallery's fundraising department, assists with raising the profile of frames amongst potential donors and also organised the 'crowdfunding' initiative which facilitated the purchase of a sixteenth-century Italian frame to surround Titian's The Allegory of Prudence (NG6376). I am currently co-curating an exhibition at the National Gallery on Sansovino frames, which has prompted a short film, public talks and a series of frame labels which will be displayed alongside the Gallery's collection of important frames for the duration of the show. 14 It is hoped that elements of these initiatives will be emulated in both regional and national museums and art galleries. Such activities might prompt new discourses on the conceptual roles of frames and framing and, in turn, encourage new discussions on framing practices. I would hope that these conversations would take place in an interdisciplinary context and thus join-up hitherto, somewhat disparate, thinking on the subject of frames and framing.

- [1] For the frame and representation see Marin 1996, 79-95 and here Chapter 1, 23-8.
- [2] See Chapter 2 for this discussion.
- [3] For my earlier descriptions of these authors' publications see Chapter 1, 24 and Chapter 2, 71.
- [4] See Chapter 1, 18 and Conlin 2006, 410.
- [5] For my discussion of the historiography of the 'Renaissance', see Chapter 1, 20.
- [6] For my discussion of Hoeniger see Chapter 1, 38-40.
- [7] Lebensztejn 1988.
- [8] For my previous discussion of these authors see Chapter 1, 23-4 and Chapter 2, 70.
- [9] I refer readers to my discussion of these topics in Chapter 1.
- [10] There is more work to be done on the connections between frames and spectatorship.
- [11] See Chapter 1, 35-7.
- [12] See Chapter 5, 290-2 for Fry and the National Gallery.
- [13] This research is unsurprising as Schade is deeply influenced by Bode's re-framing practices.
- [14] Penny et al, Frames in Focus: The Sansovino Frame, 2015.

Appendix I: Nomenclature

As Nicholas Penny has established, the vocabulary used to describe frames has developed from a range of subject-specific terminologies, including carpentry ('dowel'), architecture ('entablature') and ornament descriptions ('egg-and-dart'). Frame makers and dealers have also contributed to frame nomenclature, employing terms such as tabernacle, where an art historian would use *all'antica* frame. For an extensive list of frame definitions associated with Italian frames, I direct readers to Timothy Newbery's seminal article on the subject. The terms below are ones which I use frequently in this thesis.

All'antica frame

A frame formed of an entablature and supported by columns and pilasters. The type was used extensively in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to frame altarpieces. Frame dealers refer to this frame type as a 'tabernacle' frame. Fine examples can be found in the Basilica of Santo Spirito, Florence.

Autonomous frame

A frame that was and remains separate from the panel it contains.

Bole

A coloured clay used as a ground for water gilding.

Cassetta frame

Cassetta (Italian for 'little box') consists of a frieze normally ornamented with pastiglia work or incised decoration.

Dresden Gallery frame

A mid-eighteenth-century frame type made in the French Rococo style. The frame was used as a gallery frame in Dresden and continues to be employed today. Each example displays the king's coat of arms on the top edge and a shield with the initial 'AR' (Augustus Rex) on the bottom edge.

Engaged frame

A frame that is attached to the panel but not made out of the same piece of wood.

Frieze

A flat area between two mouldings.

Gesso

An animal glue and chalk mixture which is used as a ground for gilding.

Integral frame

A frame that is part of the main panel.

Levi-Penny Survey

A frame survey undertaken in the 1990s by Paul Levi and Nicholas Penny.

Moulding frame

A frame consisting of a cavetto sight and an ogee.

Palimpsest frame

A frame that is made out of old and new parts.

Pitti Palace frame

Florentine seventeenth-century frame employed at Palazzo Pitti, Florence palace. Its main ornament consists of flourishing leaves.

Sansovino frame

A late-sixteenth-century frame type named after the architect Jacopo Sansovino, although in practice, it has nothing to do with him beyond a connection with Venice. Sansovino frames normally consist of broken scrolls at the sides with pediment and mask heads.

Slip

An insert applied to the sight edge, usually employed to avoid cutting a frame.

Tabernacle

See all'antica frame.

Tondo

A circular frame, usually ornamented with laurel leaf and berry, most often associated with fifteenth- and sixteenthcentury Florentine frame making.

Watts frame

An oak cassetta frame with a flat frieze. The gold leaf is laid directly onto the oak.

I Penny, 'Frames', 8.

² Newberry, 'Towards an agreed nomenclature for Italian picture frames', 1985, 119-128.

Appendix II: Frame Dealers

Pioneering research on London frame makers has been undertaken in this field by Jacob Simon, and the information below is indebted to his research, particularly his website 'British picture frame makers, 1630–1950'. There is currently no such resource for tracing their continental colleagues.

Buck

Frederick Charles Buck worked as a carver, gilder, frame maker, picture restorer and dealer in paintings and furniture from 1881–1929. In his capacity as a frame maker, he made a number of frames for William Holman Hunt. The artist Philip de László, collector George Salting and the National Gallery purchased antique frames from Buck.

Critchfield

Henry Critchfield took over Robert Thick's carving, gilding, frame-making and restoring business in 1854 and in so doing his contract with the National Gallery. Critchfield was responsible for the majority of the standard pattern gallery frames commissioned by Eastlake and Wornum during the 1850s and 1860s.

Dolman - Reginald Dolman & Co, Reginald Dolman & Sons 1877-1918

Reginald Dolman (1820 – possibly 1881) was probably in a business partnership with the carver, gilders and frame makers, George Dolman & Sons, who were based in Greenwich, London, until 1861, before the business took his first name. Dolman & Co, had the dominant position in carrying out framing for national museums, including the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery and the Imperial War Museum from 1880. The firm produced a number of frames for artists, including Lawrence Alma-Tadema and John Brett. Amongst the frames commissioned by the National Gallery were the San Giobbe frames.

Levi

Paul Levi (1919–2008) was encouraged by the art historian Johannes Wilde (who became Deputy Director of the Courtauld Institute) and the collector Count Antoine Seilern to train as a frame maker under F.A. Pollak, where he gained specialist knowledge in antique frames.³

Paul Mitchell Ltd

Founded in 1930 by John Mitchell. The firm specialised in antique frames and copies of them.

Pollak

F. A. Pollak (1896-1968) ran Vergolderei Pygmalion in Berlin from 1925 to 1937. In 1937, he fled Nazi Germany and set up a frame-making business in London, where he trained Paul Levi. Pollak framed historic and contemporary art (notable examples include making frames for Pietro Annigoni). He framed at least two paintings for the National Gallery in 1946. Michelangelo's *Entombment* (NG790) and Mantegna's *The Virgin and Child with the Magdalen and Saint John the Baptist* (NG274).

Pygmalion

Frame-making business established by F. A. Pollak. See above.

H. J. Spiller Ltd

H. J. Spiller (1960-1989) was a specialist dealer in antique frames which were purchased at auction.

Wiggins and Sons

Established in the early twentieth century. It was based in St James's, London, and dealt mainly in antique frames and reproductions of them.

³ Cannon-Brookes, 'Paul Levi', 2008.

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NG5/84/3: Eastlake, C.L., Faraday, M., Russell, W., Further Report on the Subject of the Protection of the Pictures in the National Gallery. 16 Nov 1850.

NG5/121: Transcriptions of letters from Charles Eastlake to R.N. Wornum, 1855-1865.

NG5/127/5: Letter from A. Zen, Venice respecting transmission of 14 pictures, frames, bill, 2 April 1856.

NG5/137/1: Anon. 'The National Gallery', *Quarterly Review*, 1859, pp. 341-81.

NG5/139/7: Letter from Charles Eastlake to R.N. Wornum, 23 Oct 1860, from Paris.

Eastlake has heard from Mr Mündler from Rome and gives payment, transaction, and insurance details for the Fra Angelicos. He writes of the necessity of a handsome frame. He needs details of incidental expenses.

NG5/161/15: Eastlake to Wornum, 20 October 1865, from the Hôtel de Ville.

NG5/302/3: Letter from Charles Eastlake to R.N. Wornum, 14 Dec 1859, from 7 Fitzroy Square.

Eastlake approves and comments on the Costa frame (NG629). When Bentley has done the Ruysdaels (NG627-8), Pinti should deal with the Costa.

NG7/45/5: Letter from Dolman & Son giving a Tender for the disused frames in the National Gallery, 18 May 1883.

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NG7/443/1: Lord Curzon's introductory letter to the Trustees, 29 Jan 1914.

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NG15/4: Report from the Select Committee on National Monuments and Works of Art with the Minutes of Evidence and Appendix, London, 1841.

NG15/8: Report, Proceedings and Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee Appointed to Consider the Present Accommodation Afforded by the National Gallery; and the Best Mode of Preserving and Exhibiting to the Public, the Works of Art Given to the Nation or Purchased by Parliamentary Grants, London, 1850.

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The Lane Bequest, import of frames from France, loan collection list, 'Rearrangement at the National Gallery', draft press release, lecture lists, rehanging schedule from December 1955, Duncan Grant, Vanessa Bell et al. complain about paint colour, list of Angerstein Collection, labelling, re-framing, orders and estimates.

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Estate Duty, valuations, opinions on honours candidates, Kessler pictures, Civil Defence, disposal of old frames, 'Distribution of the National Gallery Collection' (memo by Treasury), 'Government and the Arts in Britain' memo, advice on lost property.

NG16/330/1: Registry files: Weaver Report, 1947-1948. Dr J.R.H.

Weaver's file, including:

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NGA1/1/64/7: Letter from Federico Sacchi to William Boxall, 31 May 1872.

Regarding his work on Cremona artists and giving Boxall a brief overview of affairs in the Italian art market, including the possible upcoming sale of the Averoldi portraits at Brescia.

NGA1/1/70/6: Letter from William Russell to William Boxall, 15 June 1873.

Regarding the framing of the Mantegna and concerns about the taste of Wornum and Critchfield in such matters (NG902).

NGA1/1/70/8: Letter from R.N. Wornum to William Boxall, 15 June 1873.

Regarding William Russell's interference in the selection of a frame for a Mantegna (NG902).

NGA2/3/2/13: Ralph Nicholson Wornum's Diary, 13 Aug 1855 – 21 Nov 1877.

Diary written by Wornum when he was Keeper and Secretary of the National Gallery. On the first page under the title Wornum has written 'Not official, for my own use and ready information'.

NGA2/3/3/81: Letter from Sir Charles Eastlake to Ralph N. Wornum, 19 Aug 1861. Milan.

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NGA2/3/3/85: Letter from Ralph N. Wornum to Sir Charles Eastlake, 7 Dec 1864.

Relating to the calling of a Trustees' meeting, a frame for the Guido Head of Christ [Ecce Homo NG271] and the Van Eyck [The Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and his Wife Giovanna Cenami (The Arnolfini Marriage) NG186].

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Harriet O'Neill (1980 – 2023)

Harriet once wrote: "Culture reaffirms life, it is the magic and the spark. I want to show that art, architecture and music raise your spirits and make your soul soar". She committed her life to bringing her love of the arts and infectious enthusiasm for their importance to as many people as possible.

Harriet was a curator, educator, and researcher whose life and career were guided by her passion for art, history, and culture. The discovery of knowledge and sharing her boundless enthusiasm with others were the things that lit her up and her doctoral research was, in many ways, the perfect fit.

Harriet's cultural journey really began with her first trip to Italy after her GCSEs in 1997. Her visits to Florence and Rome ignited a lifelong love and fascination with Italy's history, culture, and language. But it was in Venice – the home of the San Giobbe doorway that she discusses at great length in this book – that she was at her happiest. Harriet took every chance to spend time in Venice, immersing herself in its beauty. She wrote to my daughter – her beloved niece, then aged six – about the three months she spent there as an intern at the Guggenheim, telling her: "I spent a very

happy three months at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection which is in a beautiful city called Venice. Peggy Guggenheim loved dogs". Venice was where Harriet truly felt at home, surrounded by the art and history that inspired her. The way Harriet described Venice in that note, I think, captures her child-like wonder, sense of fun, and infectious enthusiasm.

Harriet's passion for Italy was also at the heart of her academic life, leading her to pursue a collaborative doctoral project between the National Gallery, London, and University College London. Her research focused on the intersection of art, history, and frames – literally and metaphorically – challenging conventional narratives and reimagining the Renaissance within contemporary discourse. Her work enriched the academic community and informed her curatorial practices, influencing her subsequent projects at institutions like Royal Holloway, University of London, and the National Gallery.

This publication was the product of so many hours of study, writing and rewriting, combining her intellectual curiosity, capacity for hard work, and ability to find new ways of looking at things — quite literally, in the case of picture frames. Harriet once said: "The excitement of a really good work of art is that it has the power to make the soul soar, to capture and reveal an elusive magic". Her doctoral research embodied this philosophy, and allowed her to delve deeply into her love of all of the things she found so fascinating. Harriet also never procrastinated or wasted time. She felt strongly the privilege of her position and wanted to do the very best she could for her subject and for the supervisors and institutions who showed faith in her.

Harriet's career was defined by her roles as both curator and educator. She held positions that spanned the UK and Italy, including Assistant Director for Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences at the British School at Rome (BSR). There, she supported and developed collaborative research and cultural projects between galleries, libraries, archives, museums, and universities, cementing her reputation as a bridge between academia and the cultural sector. Everyone she met has spoken of her warmth, her friendliness and ability to make people feel at home and never taking life too seriously. I visited at Christmas last year and I know she would have

been delighted to discover four new cats had moved into the garden and were living in a little house made especially for them.

Harriet's curatorial work was driven by making art accessible and engaging to diverse audiences. Her 'Frames in Focus: Sansovino Frames' exhibition at The National Gallery demonstrated her expertise in both the technical and interpretative aspects of art curation. Her passion for education extended into the classroom, where she taught at institutions including University College London and Royal Holloway. Harriet was not just an academic but a mentor and guide who nurtured the intellectual growth of her students, encouraging them to see the world through the lens of art and culture.

She wanted everyone to benefit from and enjoy the value of art and culture. In addition to her professional achievements, Harriet was a dedicated trustee of the Sussex Archaeological Society and the Society of the Promotion of Roman Studies. Her contributions helped shape the future of these institutions, ensuring that history and heritage remained vibrant and accessible to all. In 2020, during the national lockdown due to the pandemic, she spent hours on online calls with her niece, Anna, who had just started primary school, devising art, music and poetry projects – and scavenger hunts – they could do together. She later put her creations into a lockdown scrapbook for Anna, that we now treasure as a solid reminder of her generosity of time and spirit, care for Anna's learning and ability to make everything fun.

Her life was one of intellectual rigour, artistic passion, and deep empathy. She lived by the belief that the arts not only enhanced life but were crucial to every aspect of being alive, and brought art into the hearts and minds of everyone she encountered. Her legacy will endure not only in the exhibitions she curated and the research she conducted but in the lives she touched.

Harriet's love for Italy was something we shared as sisters. Italy was a place where Harriet found inspiration, and it is where I will go to remember her – surrounded by the art and beauty that she cherished so deeply. I will always treasure our memories of Italy and the things she showed me there. From students exploring its art and culture on a shoestring, dreaming of returning to Rome with

a bit more money in our pockets so we could dine in a restaurant in a beautiful square rather than eating takeaways on church steps, to visiting her at the British School of Rome with my daughter and enjoying seeing her bring the magic of the city to life for an eight-year-old.

It is impossible to capture the complexity of a whole person in such a short space – especially someone with as many different interests and passions as my sister, Harriet. Art and art history was, however, the thread that ran through her life and cherishing the beauty in life and art is the way we will remember her.

Cordelia O'Neill Edinburgh, September 2024

Academic research by Harriet O'Neill

(compiled by Carlo Corsato)

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

O'Neill, H. 'Framing encounters with fine art: the operation of picture frames in Roman palace galleries over the long 17th century', *Il palazzo reale e immaginato: conversazioni, descrizioni, rappresentazioni*, eds. F. Cappelletti, F. Freddolini, H. O'Neill, C. Volpi, Milan, 2022, pp. 64–77.

O'Neill, H. 'The British Fine Art Palace at the 1911 Internation Arts Exhibition: soft power and the exhibitions branch of the board of trade'; and 'The British School of Rome: an interdisciplinary research institution in the Valle Giulia', I Monti Parioli e il "Nuovo Campo Marzo" della cultura internazionale, eds M. Fagiolo and A. Mazza, Rome, 2022, pp. 296–303, and 506–511.

O'Neill, H. 'Comati – Cosmatesque', *Temporal Stabilities*, eds V. Calvagno and M. Lezzi (exh. cat. 4m2 Gallery, John Cabot University, Rome). London, 2020

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O'Neill, H. 'From drawing to painting: the afterlives of Michelangelo's sketches and "cartonetti", *Michelangelo a colori: Marcello Venusti, Lelio Orsi, Marco Pino, Jacopino del Conte*, eds F. Parilla with M. Pirondini, Rome, 2019, pp. 13–15.

O'Neill, H. 'Old Frames for New. The operation of frames as objects and concepts at the National Gallery, c. 1850–1940', *Rahmen und frames. Dispositionen des Visuellen in der Kunst der Vormoderne*, eds. D. Wagner and F. Conrad, Berlin, 2018, pp. 95–110.

Robins A. with contributions by A. Goudie, S. Herring, H. O'Neill, C. Riopelle, *Painters' Paintings from Freud to Van Dyck* (exh. cat. National Gallery, London). London, 2016.

Penny, N., Schade, P., O'Neill, H. Frames in Focus: The Sansovino Frame (exh. cat. National Gallery, London). London, 2015.

O'Neill, H. 'Re-framing the Renaissance Canon at the National Gallery: the case of the 'San Giobbe' frames', in *Framings*, eds S. Kacunko, E. Harlizius-Klück, H. Körner, Berlin, 2015, pp. 145-163.

https://www.academia.edu/77272200/Framings (accessed 09/09/2024)

O'Neill, H. 'Twenty-first century re-framing at the National Gallery' in *The Real Thing? The Value of Authenticity and Replication for Conservation and Investigation*, eds Erma Hermens and Frances Lennard, London, 2014

O'Neill, H. 'London in the 1950s', and several catalogue entries in Allison, C., Gelfand, S., O'Neill, H. et al., *Slade Prints of the 1950s*, London, 2005

https://archive.org/details/sladeprintsof1950000unse/ (accessed 09/09/2024)

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Curator:

- Digital Forest, The Exhibition Space, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2018
- Hospitality on the Road to Santiago de Compostela, The Exhibition Space, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2017
- Hidden/Revealed: Community Created and Curated, The Exhibition Space, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2017
 Co-curator:
- Suffrage: Education, Activism and Votes for Women, The Exhibition Space, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2018
- Frames in Focus: Sansovino Frames, The National Gallery, London, 2015
- Irresistible Forces, Great North Museum, Newcastle, 2010
- Slade Prints of the 1950s, University College London, 2005 Research assistant:
- Delacroix and the Rise of Modern Art, The National Gallery, London, 2016
- Painters' Paintings, The National Gallery, London, 2016

MEDIA CONTRIBUTIONS

(accessed 09/09/2024)

Delacroix's Journal: Delacroix and the Rise of Modern Art, The National Gallery, London, 26 April 2016

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VetqXEvfSlU (accessed 09/09/2024)

Behind the scenes of the Framing Department at the National Gallery, The National Gallery, London, 2 July 2015
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1sR2g9dN9dM

Sansovino Frames (with Peter Schade) in Free Thinking, 2 April 2015

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